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ASTRONOMY

On the trail of the comet

John North

VICTOR CLUBE and BILL NAPIER

The Cosmic Serpent: A catastrophist view of Earth History
289pp. Faber, £12.50.
0 571 1816 X

"The Cosmic Serpent" is a name given to a hypothetical giant comet, a fiery dragon of a thing that hurled thunderbolts and generally caused mayhem in prehistoric times. If you find the hypothesis acceptable, you can say that three thousand years have all but erased the terror of those events from human memory; but that Victor Clube and Bill Napier, two professional astronomers, have caught the comet by its hypothetical tail, before it slipped from human awareness completely. They have written an exciting book about it, a book which, with its carefully calculated exterior, contains many new and challenging arguments. Patrick Moore declares on the jacket that it is one of the most extraordinary books he has ever read. The astronomical part is perhaps more sober than the title suggests - a wolf in serpent's clothing, in fact. The clothing is at times plainly uncomfortable, but was presumably donned to attract an excitement-loving public that would have been bored by the sub-title: "A Catastrophist View of Earth History". From an astronomical point of view, this is in a very different class from most popular catastrophist writing. Velikovskians will feel more at home if they read the work backwards, for it is at the end that the more sensational rewriting of history comes, not to mention a few kind words about Velikovsky's historical excursions. Fair-minded readers be warned.

The *Cosmic Serpent* is a splendid source of object lessons in how and how not to write for a wide public. Should the university world ever go into another phase of reckless expansion, some research institute for scientific-rhetorical orthopraxis might well put it under the microscope, to study its peculiar blend of fine-grained argument and fantasy. Structurally speaking, it fits together beautifully. There are touches of condescension in the fine detail in the form of phrases like "0.1 per cent of a millimetre", but they are offset by passages such as that taking for granted the notion of "hydrogen burning" in stars. Generally speaking, it is a model of plain exposition. It is rather a bore when it moralizes about the Establishment, about bandwagons falling over cliffs, the unwisdom of a prescribed wisdom, and so forth; but it has a trendy scientific touch in its excessive use of the word "scenario", which is sprinkled over its pages like hail over the globe. Historians will have to bear in mind that Copernicus and Tycho are lunar craters. How difficult it is to remember every reader, even of a review and yet if the thesis of the work is acceptable there is a reason why every reader should be concerned, for the history of the world is at stake.

The book opens with a lengthy sermon on scientific scepticism. It is pointed out that astronomers disagree about many things - for example, about quasars, spectral displacement in the light from distant star systems, and the evolution of them, the galaxies. Our Sun is of course a member of a star system ("the Galaxy") with a characteristically spiral form. It is generally accepted that the universe of galaxies is expanding. Dr Clube has argued elsewhere against this view, and in favour of the view that our Galaxy is in a state of rapid expansion. He believes that this idea is at the very heart of the book - that there are sporadic bursts of activity within the nuclei of individual galaxies, at intervals of, say, 100 million years, resulting in the ejection of material with enormous velocities.

Briefly, the spiral arms of our Galaxy are young, and our Sun is old. The Sun moves steadily through the spiral arms, crossing them every 30 million years - and having crossed what is known as Gould's belt about ten million years ago. Now the Galaxy has been seen three explosions in its history in the last 100 million years, and perhaps 30 million years ago the consequences of crossing the

spiral arms, some astronomers have thought that proximity to a supernova, an exploding star, might have upset the history of life on Earth; others that interstellar gas clouds might have provided us with our ice ages; but here it is argued - and at a qualitative level very convincingly - that our solar system acts as a large gravitational scoop, as it were, for billions of large solid bodies. These "planetesimals", or conglomerates of ice, dust, and rock, include our comets. Recent telescopic evidence is put forward for the existence of gigantic interstellar comets, and a sketch is included of the way they might grow in interstellar space. To a catastrophist Earth historian, though, the question of paramount interest concerns their potential bombardment of the Earth, probably been struck about ten times by missiles with energies of the order of

ten or twenty million hydrogen bombs, and once or twice by objects with twenty times as much energy. Tennyson's "Nature, red in tooth and claw" suddenly becomes an almost cosy image. How plausible is all this? I can only say that, irritating as I find their occasional side-swipes at mainstream opinion, their vague talk of a "new physics", and their tendency to introduce quite irrelevant bits of scientific history whenever things are getting exciting, I am willingly carried along by the general drift of the two writers' astronomical arguments. Craters seem to be ubiquitous in the solar system. Studies of the lunar surface suggest that the cratering rate was once higher than it is now. Hudson's Bay and the Gulf of Mexico are perhaps impact structures, and plausibly: huge impacts in the remote

past, and much more frequent encounters with smaller bodies in Earth-crossing orbits, even in relatively recent times. Objects in this second class would devastate areas a few hundred miles across. This is where the short-period comets come into the story. There are over a thousand members of the family of Apollo-type objects with a diameter of more than a kilometre, and these are explained as long-period comets, pulled into their short-period orbits chiefly by Jupiter, and boiled dry, so to speak, relatively quickly. It is hard to explain why there are so many short-period comets. The suggestion made in the book is that they result from the fragmentation of a single large comet; but no matter. The important historical point is that one or two of them could well have come close to the Earth, with spectacular effects, both visually, and

important prehistoric gods which were comets in the sky. Lucretius prompts the hypothesis; but before reaching for a translation, you must bear in mind that it will have been done by someone for whom comets are not what they were in the mind of man. (Had it been otherwise, the somewhat dark comment goes, "scholarship would already have foundered".) The drift of the argument is to show that although comets were once among our chief deities, later moves against naturalistic religions (by such as the Greeks, Amos, Zoroaster, and the Buddha) might have come because some comet got thrown out of the solar system, or because the fuel for its tail was used up. This unlikely tale hangs by a very slender thread, and Lucretius is the sceptic who gets most of the limelight in its telling. He comes along, refusing to find *mundi* in lands and Sun, sky and sea, stars and Moon, and telling us that it wouldn't be right to impose a punishment "as on the rebellious Titans, on all those who by their reasoning... seek to darken... the Sun". The comment offered is that the argument "can make reasonable sense only if comets were among the gods and the Titans were a special group of comets which could somehow, on occasion, dim the Sun".

The excessively enthusiastic sleuthing doesn't stop there. For it to be thought possible that a comet may darken the Sun, "the knowledge that some very large comet indeed had at some time appeared must have been available". It doesn't seem to worry the two writers that such knowledge is not reported in a less oblique manner in other surviving texts. And almost as a justification for the tendentious argument that has just gone, they add quite gratuitously: "In like manner, one cannot casually reject the claim by Diodorus of Sicily that the Chaldeans for example knew about the regular return of periodic comets". Not casually, perhaps, (Lucretius is presumably meant to have known the principle, since when the Sun caught Phaeton in his fall, and set him and his steeds on their proper course, we are invited to read the description of Phaeton, "the everlasting torch of the firmament", as that of a regularly recurring comet.)

The *Cosmic Serpent* is filled with this sort of wishful thinking.

It is remarkable indeed how few are the recognizable references to comets as such in Babylonian and Egyptian records. This cannot be because they did not exist, so it must be because they were generally described as something else.

Once we recognize this fact, "we are obliged to see them as being among the most important and fundamental elements of the ancient sky", and "the Hellenic philosophers were thus responsible for a really quite major revolution in human thought: they were the first to describe comets in particular much as they appear to us, the first to make rational attempts to explain their origin in terms that we recognize as scientific". Such honesty in the degradation of one's strategy in *deceitful* is rare. The strategy is certainly powerful. The cosmic god Phao spews forth the deities Neheh and Nun, and this suggests that either Jupiter spews forth comets as the result of a close encounter, or simply that a large comet split into two. Leto gives birth to Apollo and Artemis. Not quite Phaeton coming from Apollo who was fathered by Zeus, but the underlying themes are not dissimilar when once they are recognized as derived from different accounts of a comet breaking up". (Zeus is of much greater antiquity than Homer, by the way, since Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit are descended from a common Indo-European language.) Herodotus's battle of the Titans begs to be interpreted as a shower of comets doing battle with pre-existing ones; the course of evolution of Chinese dragons (taking 3000 years) suggests short-period comets; the World Tree of Norse cosmology is seen as a giant comet; and so the list goes back and forth through historical times, with its hints of knowledge lost but terror preserved. Was Apollo's bow the crescent head of a huge comet, and was Typhon originally a huge fall of meteorites? Comets are like snakes in a



Dis (evil)aster (star): a nineteenth-century French cartoon reproduced from the book reviewed on this page.

Captured by the Sun's gravitational field, and put into orbit round the Sun, their acquisition by our solar system seems to be erratic, but their loss from the system is fairly steady. Some (unconventional) statistics for survival imply that the last batch to have been captured was acquired a few million years ago. It must be said that much of the book's scientific colour comes from its use of sparkling new observations and its authors' willingness to mention alternative interpretations. Evidence for the rates of acquisition of comets is drawn from meteoroids found on the Moon's surface. But do these come from the asteroid belt, are they an interstellar dust, or of cometary origin? Spacecraft have already provided clues allowing some of the alternatives to be ruled out. Some comets get into the asteroid belt. Perhaps asteroids are inactive comets. There are fifty or so satellites, ring systems, and Chiron sized bodies in the solar system. (Chiron is in orbit between Saturn and Uranus, and is of the size of a large asteroid - say as big as a good-sized mountain.) Five or ten of the fifty are in unstable orbits, and are likely to be lost to the system, so the picture of a steady-state solar system seems to be wrong. This is a key point in the argument, for episodic capture of such objects by the solar system implies occasional bombardment of the Earth.

How often, and how catastrophic, are these encounters likely to have been? The suggestion is that we are likely to have been hit by objects of the size of the asteroid Apollo a handful of times in the last few hundred million years. (Apollo was discovered in 1932, and was the first asteroid known to be in an Earth-crossing orbit, that is, to be in a potential collision hazard.) More specifically, we are told that in the last 600 million years the Earth has

there is reason for thinking that there are many large impact structures on the Earth's surface of the order of a thousand kilometres across. Catastrophes on the scale suggested would of course lead to the sudden extinction of species, and provide an explanation for the apparently erratic extinction rates revealed by palaeontologists, with "brief episodes of mass extinction of organisms followed by invasions of new forms into vacated ecological zones" (N. D. Newall). Does the fact that major extinctions seem to be associated with the principal geological boundaries (Permian to Triassic, and so on) mean that they share a common cause? In the case of one boundary there is a sudden jump in the concentration of Iridium in clay (at the Cretaceous-Tertiary boundary), Iridium perhaps of interstellar origin.

But there are possible effects other than at the Earth's surface. Quite modest (and hence more frequent) impacts could well re-align the circulation currents in the core which generate the magnetic field. The magnetization of rocks has long been known to give evidence for a reversal in the magnetic field rather more often than once in a million years, and the coincidence of falls of tektites with reversals might be thought to support the idea that associated impacts are their cause. Then there is the coincidence of dinosaur extinction with the greatest period of volcanism in the Earth's history; and the occurrence of volcanism generally in episodic bursts, something an impact theory seems to explain more effectively than the theory of plate tectonics. (The theory of continental drift, powered by slow currents within the mantle, is not itself at issue.) It all hangs together very

Patricia Craig

The Unknown Conan Doyle: Essays on Photography
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0 436 13302 4

On this obsessive ferreting out the past of his admirers.

Actually, there was never any mystery about the source of his detective method popularized by the Sherlock Holmes stories: Conan Doyle observed it at work in the Edinburgh Surgeon Dr Joseph Bell, who entertained his students and colleagues by drawing certain conclusions from the evidence in front of him. The names of the detective? The author himself stated plainly enough that half of it came from an American detective, Oliver Wendell Holmes. Owen Dudley Edwards has found, among Doyle's schoolfellows, a Patrick Sherlock, who may, he thinks, have supplied the famous forename, especially if Doyle was indulging a sense of irony at the time: this Sherlock was the dullest boy in the school. Watson? Dudley

Wit and charm are the qualities ascribed to the elder Doyle before drink disabled him, and in this respect, Dudley Edwards concedes, he must have contributed something to the Holmes of Baker Street (as opposed to the Holmes of the chase, or the public Holmes) but he finds more of the author's mother in Doyle's fiction, claiming for example, that her essential characteristics are reproduced in Sir Nigel de Rhuys in *The Hound of the Baskinvs*. Mary Polak Doyle sets out a list of six qualities: high principles, prudence, selflessness, literary enthusiasm, and so on: the chapter dealing with her ends with the

A high-contrast, black and white illustration of a man with a mustache, wearing a suit and tie, sitting at a desk. He is holding a pen and writing on a piece of paper. A small bust of a man is visible on the desk next to him.

reference to Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*. The Jesuit schoolmasters of Belvedere, Dudley Edwards remarks, "may have counted themselves fortunate if they appeared in immortal print as themselves, not as the hound of the Baskervilles". He considers it worthwhile to assure us that the villain of Doyle's novel, Stapleton, wasn't drawn from life. "Whatever Conan Doyle may have thought of the Jesuits of Stonyhurst, he certainly did not credit them with passing round round alleged sisters but actually wives whom they flogged in private. Oh really?"

The stories which now appear for the first time in book form (*Uncollected Stories*) cannot have satisfied their

The sprightly essay has contributed to the *British Library Photography in the early 1800s* which is now been dug up, a hundred years and put together to make a new collection which, like the *Illustrated Stories*, is issued to draw attention to the author's forgotten underworld. These young accounts of the photographic expeditions of [1] Cormorants with a Camera, [2] Plates on a Wet Moor, and [3] conceived in such a spirit of lightness that you expect to come across labels like "Trips with a Tripod." find the subtle, "Three Days on a Moor", appended to the collection. The technical details regarding the paper's readership are inconsequential; the cheery evocations of young tinkering about in tents and knickerbockers on the tops of Whin emerges as the key to the impression of the author in the eyes of a photographic expert, a spirit of mischief and his offshoots to him, and before he allowed himself to be regarded as the champion of young girls of Cottingley who gained some notoriety in 1917 or thereabouts by seeing fairies and taking pictures to prove it. The resulting photographs were held by some people to be evidence for the existence of fairies; perhaps it's appropriate

"One's only regret is that it accounts a conclusion. With Smiley retired, Connie Sachs back in the States, and Peter Quilliam exiled to the old order has passed on," he wrote T. J. Binyon with some discernment in his review for *The Honourable Secret* in the publication of *The New York Times* (1952 pp. Hodder and Stoughton, 0 340 28376 9) which commended Le Carré's trilogy of novels—*Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, *The Honourable Secret*, and *Smiley's People*—encourages, again, though it is hoped that, again, it is presumed to be the last. Smiley says he will come to an end. It would be an appropriate conclusion, if not disappointing to the admirers of Smiley and Sir Alec Guinness, who portray him so brilliantly. But Smiley has had a long and successful career and has by now always been the central figure in stories in which he appears. He has a bit part in *Tailor, Soldier, Spy* and *The Honourable Secret*, from the *Cold*. In this way Le Carré makes much play of the tension between the public and the private domain. *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* is not exactly the state of the nation, but the state of its security apparatus, contrasting the class and competence of its characters. But it also reveals the extent of Smiley's own political involvement in the quest for Kalia, which of course is the quest for the state of the nation. Is the last? The argument, as Smiley says, is that there is no other.

Though he cannot be called an Antiquary yet he appears a great lover of Antiquities; and no less an admirer of new discoveries, provided they be both of them Matters of Importance and worth a wise man's regard. For it does not belong to either of these characters that a man is a curious collector of medals, images, or figures, or a dealer in other insignificant trifles, which can neither serve to illustrate history, regulate chronology or adjust any momentous difficulty in the records of time, but are only reverenced for their rustiness, illegible characters and exotic figures; nor that he is fond of every little improvement in arts or sciences which perhaps has no other tendency than the advantage of some particular trade or profession among men and serves only to divert the mind from more solid objects. Whereas our Arabian aspires to higher things; he loves antiquities but to only such as draw the veil from the infancy of time, and uncover the cradle of the world. This makes him insist with so much zeal and passion on the records of the Chinese and the Indians. He admires new discoveries but only such as shall either conduct us to the yet unknown parts of the Earth or present us with a truer and more

An clearly commendable enterprise, and one which struck the resonant chord of emergency of the 1950s in England, those years of endless war, social dislocation and intellectual experiment. Moreover the *Letters* seem to have initiated or encouraged that style of comment, satire and polemic which masqueraded as a description of the author's own country by a foreigner. An edition came out almost every other year for forty years; by 1970 there had been twenty-six. They were singled out for praise by Swift, who suggested them as a model; writers as varied as Charles Lamb, Isaac of Israeli and Colley Cibber were to acknowledge their debt. The *Letters* therefore constitute something of a literary landmark.

Their authorship, however, has been disputed (*Giornale di Marana's Magazine*, 1796, p. 33; 1840, II, 142, 260, 374, 465; 1901, I, 131 and the relevant entries in the *DNB*, *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* and the *Catalogue of the British Library*). The small volumes, *L'Espol Turc*, had been published in French in 1684 by a Genoese exile in Paris, Giovanni Paolo Marana. Two others were prepared by 1686 but trouble with the censor drove Marana to Amsterdam, where the public proved lukewarm. By that time, four volumes of Marana's *Lettere* apparently existed in print and he collected twelve more in manuscript. These were tiny in comparison with the English versions; four of Marana's *Lettere* scarcely made one of the English. Marana's text passed, in Holland, to the English publisher Henry Rhodes and it was generally accepted that the first English volume was a translation of Marana. No other translation, however, is known to have come from Marana himself, while several other substantial volumes appeared in English. An edition of the full set which appeared in Cologne in 1694 was a translation from the English of 1684. Marana himself is said to have translated. In melancholy in 1689,

Midgely certainly owned the copyright of the *Spy* and, after its publication had been completed, sold it to Henry Rhodes and Joseph Hindmarsh in December 1693 for £209 11s 9d. Furthermore, many of the Prefaces to the *Spy* volumes, in their attacks on the Schools of Christianity, are strongly reminiscent of Midgely's own onslaughts in his *Natural Philosophy*.

An identification of the actual composer was made by John Dunton, variously described as an eccentric mad or crazy bookseller. He was certainly distinctive. Once, while on one of those arduous and self-improving excursions much favoured by his century, and busy planning the further shape of his life, he walked straight into a river. Too mercurial for the Church and given, in his own words, to rambling projects, he characteristically entitled his autobiography, published in 1705, *The Life and Errors of John Dunton*. He opened a bookshop in 1681 which was part shop, part warehouse and part fashionable chamber and paid extravagant prices to his hacks. He welcomed America in 1686 and commented on the similarity between Indian customs and those of the Ancient Britons, wandered to the Netherlands under the sign and settled in London under the sign of the Black Raven in 1688. He launched the Athenian Society, which in 1699 discussed the authorship of the *Turkish Spy*.

Duntun himself had no doubt, He attributed it to a hack writer, William Bradshaw, Education for the Church. Bradshaw "fell off" after finishing his studies. He slunk into a minor but was fixed on by Duntun the penguin but was in history and geography. Poverty perjured him and he made off with some of Duntun's equipment. The bookseller forgave him, however, because "he was the best accomplished hackney writer I have ever met with." His genius was quite above the common size and his style was incomparably fine." Bradshaw passed under the control of Dr Robbert Midgely who employed him on a greater design which would take several years paying him forty shillings a sheet, half as fee and half to pay off his debts. Bradshaw completed the project but then disappeared. Duntun was convinced that he was the author of the spy, but feared he had died . . . as he was so young and untried with the very blackness of the crime, he was not even released in his own person."

Most of the characters in this drama were in both the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, shared two characteristics: they were all plunged into permanent gloom and several of them married the daughters of sea-admirals. The two phenomena may certainly have been related, but the certain and almost exclusive cause of the occupational hazards of the boocore trade.

Discounting a few grace-noted novels (twisted into the *indulgence* by De Witt Johnson, the view generally prevailed that, after the first volume of the *Spy* the work had been composed by Bradshaw under the supervision of Migtley. In the nineteenth century, the distinguished historian, Henry Hallam enriched this interpretation: Hallam came out of the White aristocracy around Holland House. Feastoned with honours, he won the praise of Mignet, and shared a royal prize with Washington Irving. One of his three major works was a history of the literature of Europe published in the late 1830s; in this the Migtley-Bradshaw authorship of the *Spy* was

Arthur and more particularly his son William were intimates of Tennyson's and of Sir Anthony Panizzi, a presiding genius of the British Museum. And through these years, a steady laser beam of hatred was being directed at Panizzi from the vicinity of Greenwich. Its director was a remarkable literary scholar, Bolton Corney, who haunted the back room of the British Museum. He loathed Panizzi and had protested to Palmerston about his appointments to the Museum. He was a devoted late – an admiral's daughter of course – He served as a clerk in the Royal Hospital at Greenwich, and was a prominent member of the Shakespearean, Camden and Hakluyt Societies and an auditor of the Literary Fund. He was a bibliomaniac. Every room in his house was packed with books from floor to ceiling. They were piled four or five high on the floor of his study, his dining room, his bedroom and even his lavatory. He poured out scholarly treatises on all manner of subjects mostly in the form of virulent critiques of fellow scholars. Perhaps as a consequence, most of his work was published privately. Apparently worn out by this sustained effort, he married, retired to Barnes and succumbed to melancholy.

In 1840, after some months of total immersion in the material, he launched a monumental assault on Halliwell in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, which promptly lurching into one of those icily polite but venomous literary controversies which have so enlivened the history of our island race. Corney was a master of the European literature on the *Spy*. He posed as the champion of the cheated Marana and poured scorn on his alleged English handlers and on all previous English assessments. His argument was sustained and cogent. All poor Halliwell could come up with were the facts that the English volumes were much larger than those of Marana which had survived and that the *Spy* was accurate on the affairs of the English court. The seeming rather weak, Corney, who served as an ensign in the 28th Foot, had won a medal for good marksmanship. He demonstrated his prowess. In the *Catalogue of the British Library* today (no doubt much to the discomfort of the shade of Sir Anthony Panizzi) and in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, it is Bolton Corney who is canonized. While the controversy is noted, *The Letters of a Turkish Spy* are considered to be wholly a translation from Giovanni Paolo Marana. At best, the work of Midgely and Bradshaw were mere hack editing or adaptation.

It is at this point that I am compelled to utter a faint cry of protest from the wilder reaches of the Celtic Fringe.

In the eight volume of the *Turkish Spy*, originally published in December 1693, there appeared a story which could not possibly have come from the pen of Giovanni Paolo Marana. For the life of me, I cannot see how Marana could have been in any way responsible for it, particularly if he did withdraw from melancholy in 1689. In Letter XII of Book Three in the eighth volume, ostensibly dated from Paris on the second day of the eleventh moon of 1686, Mahmoud commented on Charles II of England, "a Prince of great Wit and Honour, a Prince of great Courage," of Hungary, Debonair, and Amorous, much addicted to Wine and Women; munificent in his Gifts and Rewards to Persons of Merit, and to those who have the Happiness to please him in his Recreations; and especially to his Concubines". After touching on the Popish Plot, the Spy went on:

This *Prince*, as I said before, has several *Nations* under his Dominion; and 'tis thought, he scarce knows the just extent of his *Territories* in *America*. There is a region in the *Continent*, inhabited by a *People* whom they call *Tuscaroras* and *Doegs*. Their language is the same as is spoken by the *British* or *Welsh*; *Nation* that formerly possessed a part of the *Island of Great Britain*, but were by degrees driven out of it into the Mountainous Corner of the *Islands* where their *Posterity* remain to this Day.

The Spy gave a summary but lively account of the Madoc legend, derived entirely from the writings of Sir Thomas Herbert, but then added this shattering comment:

And certain Inhabitants of Virginia (a place subject to the King of Great Britain) straggling not long ago into the Wilderness, by chance, fell among a People who according to some Law or Custom of theirs condemned him to Death when he was in Hearing of them, made his Prayer to them in the British Tongue; upon which they were so affected, that they released him. (Releas'd from Turkish Spy (1694) viii, book 1, letter 12, pp.70-06.)

This startling statement could have been derived from one source only: the dramatic 1686 narrative of the Reverend Morgan Jones. For the Madoc legend, this story was the vehicle of fate. It transformed a legend of a Welsh discovery of America into an even more powerful legend of a living tribe of Welsh Indians. The consequences of this transmutation were, quite literally, epic.

The story of Madoc has occupied many of my waking and some of my sleeping hours for twenty years. In pursuit, I have had to employ medieval and modern Welsh, medieval and modern English, Norman and later French, medieval and sixteenth-century Latin and sixteenth-century Spanish. I even had temporarily acquire a reading knowledge of Dutch. A story about a Welsh seafarer Madoc first appeared in the thirteenth century in a romance in Flemish or Dutch. Willem of Ghent, author of the highly successful Dutch version of *Reynier de Fox*; it may have circulated in France, in Foutou, Provence, Champagne. Its origins, I believe, are in the thirteenth-century exploits of Welsh high-seasmen who were Welsh high-Vikings who appeared in the Celtic-Scandinavian world of Irish Sea after the coming of Northmen. One such, a twelfth-century Freeman of Wales who raised their settlements from Lundy to Ireland in the *Orkneyinga Saga* of Icelanders themselves. During Middle Ages, the story settled into form which had a seafaring Madoc

This was transformed during the first age of British imperialism into a Welsh discovery of America (in the year 1170 to be precise). The prime mover was the celebrated magus Dr John Dee, It emerges from some remarkable correspondence between Dee and the great Flemish cosmographer Gerard Mercator over geographical texts (now lost) on Arctic exploration. Dee reported that survivors of "the race of Arthur" from the distant "polar islands had turned up at the court of the King of Norway in 1364. This was related to Arthurian tradition and to the work of the distinguished Welsh geographer Humphrey Llwyd. It was used by Dee above all, particularly in 1580 in a formal presentation to her imperial claims to Elizabeth I, to buttress his vision of a great British maritime empire in the northern latitudes extending to the very shores of America, as he called America. Naturally, it was eagerly snatched up by the seadogs busily snipping Spanish beads. What claim could the Spaniards have to the New World but a papal Bull? Gloriana could summon from across the vast Atlantic deep a British prince who had been in residence for three hundred years. The story first appeared in print in a pamphlet by Sir George Peckham in 1583 in support of a scheme to solve the problem of England's Catholics by "evaluating" them across the Atlantic. It lodged in the very first pre-eminence of that classic, Richard Hakluyt's *Præface to Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries* in the English Nation, whence it swept into general English and European discourse.

The version which proved really popular and the basis of all further elaboration was that of Sir Thomas Herbert in his *Travels*, particularly from the edition of 1638 onwards. Vivid, shrewd and lively, Herbert's *Travels*, citing fresh evidence from lost sources, ran into edition after edition until it attained the status of a classic in a travel collection of 1785. It was reinforced by the *Epistolae Ho-Elanae* or *Familiar Letters* of James Howell

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which first appeared during 1645-55 and had run to ten editions by 1753. Howell transformed an authentic fifteenth-century Welsh poem about a seafaring Madoc into an Epithet; Madoc discovered in the West Indies; this so impressed Dr Johnson that he translated it into Latin. The misreading ran with his multiple editions into that eighteenth century when not to know Howell was "an ignorance beyond barbarism".

In the margins of European discourse, then, the widely held belief persisted that there had once been tribes in the West Indies and the neighbouring mainland, loosely grouped into a somewhat imaginary Mexico, who had long carried the stigma of an initial Madocian migration in the twelfth century. These stories remained within the frontier of history; no one had suggested that the descendants of Madoc's people had survived as a distinct ethnic entity. This shadow line was first crossed in Volume eight of the *Turkish Spy* which prints what is self-evidently a version, which sounds like an oral reminiscence, of the seminal narrative of the Revd Morgan Jones. That narrative comes out of the first serious Welsh migration, that of the Quakers who accompanied William Penn after 1681. Though their hopes of a National Home for the Welsh in a Welsh colony were frustrated, the Welsh were very prominent in the early history of the colony. Thomas Lloyd of Dolobran in Montgomeryshire serving as Penn's deputy. In New York, he met Morgan Jones, who had been a contemporary of Thomas and his brother Charles at Jesus College, Oxford. Morgan, of Bassleg in Monmouthshire, had become the pastor of a Presbyterian church near Newtown, New York, but had quarrelled with his flock over their non-payment of his stipend and his own "ill-life and conversation". He told Thomas Lloyd a story so astounding that the Quaker had him make a signed statement for transmission to his brother at home.

The statement, dated March 10, 1686, declared that in 1660 Jones had been a chaplain to Major or Major-General Bennett in Virginia and had been sent with an expedition of two ships which Sir William Berkeley directed to Port Royal, South Carolina. They sailed in April, reached

Port Royal and waited for "the rest of the fleet", expected from Bermuda and Barbados. When it arrived they went "up-river" to Oyster Point. But by November 10 they were nearly starved, so Jones, with five companions, set out through the wilderness. They were captured by Tuscaroras "because we told them we were bound for Roanoke". Thrown prisoner into a hut, they were told the next day by an interpreter that they were to die in the morning.

whereupon, being something cast-down, and speaking to this effect in the British tongue, "Have I escaped so many dangers, and must I now be knocked on the head like a dog?" an Indian came to me, who afterwards appeared to be a war-captain belonging to the Sachem of the Doege (whose original I found must needs be from the Welsh) and took me up by the middle, and told me in the British tongue I should not die; and thereupon went to the Emperor of the Tuscaroras, and agreed for my ransom and the men that were with me, and paid it the next day. Afterwards they carried us to their town, and entertained us civilly for four months, and I did converse with them of many things in the British tongue, and did preach to them three times a week in the British tongue, and they would usually confer with me about anything that was difficult to them; and when we came from them they showed themselves very civil and courteous.

This is a complete farrago and may have been intended as a hoax. It is vividly reminiscent of the Pocahontas adventure of Captain John Smith and of the "lost colonist" stories of the first English settlements at Roanoke. This particular area of the continent, with its remains of old fortifications, its mysterious relics and its Spanish searches for the *gente blanco*, seems to have been rich in those white Indian stories which established the style which was to become very familiar in the endless later stories of Welsh Indians. Almost a century earlier the Spaniard Juan de Ortiz had reported experiences to the de Soto expedition in a narrative which could have been the model for all of them.

Conceptually, of course, the Jones narrative transformed the Madoc

legend into a myth of Welsh Indians. In due course and ignited by yet another conflict of imperialisms, that myth was to burn like an all-consuming prairie fire across the entire continent. It took some seventy years, however, before that fire started to burn. For, to paraphrase Aneurin Bevan on his maiden speech in the Commons, if Morgan Jones thought he had thrown a stone, he soon found that he had thrown a sponge.

Charles Lloyd does not seem to have responded to his startling intelligence; it was at least seven years before it passed into circulation. The moving force was Edward Lhuyd, an Oxford antiquarian and founder of a tradition of Welsh classical scholarship. In 1690 he had become the second keeper of the recently established Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, in succession to Dr Robert Plot. In 1693, "honest Lhuyd" on a collecting trip in Wales, met Charles Lloyd and was excited by Morgan Jones's story, though the Quaker did not send it to Oxford until August 14, 1694. Lhuyd passed the material to Dr Plot. Plot was an assiduous collector and a genial man; an FRS, he had just been re-elected secretary to the Royal Society but was counted rather credulous; county gentlemen used to boast of how they had "humbled old Plot" over his *Natural History of Staffordshire*. Some time in 1694 or 1695, Plot read Morgan Jones's story to the Royal Society. To set it in context, he simply paraphrased Herbert. He pointed out that it offered "the most incontestable proof that can be desired": England, not Spain, had the just title to America which "should have more justly been called *Madocia* than *America*". He told the Fellows, "whether this rather deserve your imprimatur, or to be committed to the flames, is humbly left to your judicious decision". The Fellows evidently came down in favour of the latter course of action: there is no trace of the story in their *Philosophical Transactions*.

Morgan Jones's narrative, in fact, did not see the light of day until 1740. The occasion was traditional, war with Spain. In 1739 an anonymous *British Sailor's Discovery* launched a blistering attack on Spain's claims on America, in terms of the Black Legend, a dismissal of Columbus and a reconfirmation of Madoc. This was repeated that the Madoc people had been absorbed into Indian culture and had disappeared.

In precisely the same cause, however, a letter appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1740 from Theophilus Evans, a vicar in Breconshire. This at long last launched the Morgan Jones story on the world.

Deeply learned in the tradition, Evans proclaimed that the new evidence made it clear that the Madocians had survived. From Elizabeth's time, he cited Dr Heylin's *Geography* to prove that the Queen had been reluctant to use Madoc against Spain: "But, they had only an obscure Tradition then, that was thought would not bear proof". Now, however, all was changed, changed utterly: "let not the proud *Dons* any more assume the Glory of this noble Discovery; but let our most Puissant Monarch of Great Britain claim his most just Rights . . . Britons, strike home!"

Madoc had certainly struck home, for Theophilus Evans was the author of *Drich y Prif Gwlad, Mirror of the Early Ages*, the second edition of which in 1740 was a bestseller and became a Welsh classic. It was this book which really made Madoc into a Welsh tradition; hitherto it had largely been the preserve of imperial Englishmen. The Morgan Jones story reached Evans after his book had been set up, in a rather different version from that which had reached Lhuyd. It lodged as a preface. And from this point, the Madoc myth in its new persona grew to titan's stature, in due course to exercise a direct influence on the history of America.

The fact that the Morgan Jones story, in anonymous form, first appeared in the *Turkish Spy* must surely contradict Bolton Corney's belief in Giovanni Paolo Marana as the author of the *Spy*. Consider the chronology. In 1684, Marana publishes his first little volume in Paris. In 1686, Marana has four little volumes in print and twelve more to hand. Early in the year, Morgan Jones's letter is sent back to Wales. In 1687, the first English volume of the *Spy* appears, incorporating more than Marana's first four. In 1689 Marana is said to have withdrawn to Italy in melancholy and in 1691 the second English volume appears, followed by two more in 1692. In 1693, Edward Lhuyd in Wales hears the Morgan Jones story. Three further English volumes of the *Spy* appear in rapid succession and, in that published in December, the Morgan Jones story, without its author's name, is given the full Mahmood treatment. In that year, Marana dies in Venice. In the following year the complete edition of the *Spy* is published and in that same year or the next Dr Plot addresses the Royal Society in vain. In 1696 a German translation is printed and the *Spy* is launched on its long and successful career. Not until 1740 does the Morgan Jones story, in a slightly different version but in full, appear in print.

It is not possible to say when or how

the story reached the producers of the *Spy*. In the list of Theophilus Evans's patrons in 1740 (who included most of the scholars of Jesus College and the Welsh librarian of the Bodleian) the name appears of a luminary who graduated in the 1720s; William Bradshaw. This brought me leaping from my penitential seat with a cry of Eureka or words in Welsh to that effect. Alas, cruel mischance . . . The could not possibly have been the Bradshaw of Dunton. The Oxford man's father, however, was a Walter Bradshaw, gentleman, of Abergavenny. Abergavenny was, then and later, a major cultural centre of Welsh historical and literary studies. During the nineteenth century it became renowned as a heartland of that dread figure in modern Welsh folklore, the Eisteddfod adjudicator. It still produces scholars of similar temper: Professor Raymond Williams of Cambridge was born nearby. I could prove that William Bradshaw, Dunton's hack genius, came from Abergavenny, my cup would run over. But I cannot.

Nevertheless, the fact stands: it's *The Letters of a Turkish Spy*, allegedly a mere translation of Marana, which first prints the Morgan Jones story which was circulating only by word of mouth in Welsh circles at home and in Oxford in 1693.

I have read the whole of the *Spy*. I had not intended to do so, but while I knew there was a Madoc reference in it, I did not know where. It was Volume Eight before I reached it. By happy chance I found it so enjoyable an experience that I even read some of it. This left a very strong impression on my mind which reinforces the incontrovertible Morgan Jones evidence. I am convinced now that the eighteenth century and Henry Hallam were correct and that Bolton Corney, however cogent his arguments, was mistaken. I therefore seize this opportunity in the manner of St David, who at that celebrated episode in Llandudnew-Breif in the sixth century, felt the ground beneath his feet and called upon mankind to renounce its sinful ways. From a similar if perhaps marginally less transcendental eminence, I call upon the Dictionary of National Biography and the *Catalogue of the British Library*, to paraphrase some words from a distinguished fellow Congregationalist, to think it possible in the bowels of Christ, that they may have been mistaken. Mad old Dunton the crazy bookseller may well have been quite correct. After all, there are greater crimes than about-mindedly walking into a river in the pursuit of truth.

THEATRE

LAURENCE OLIVIER

Confessions of an Actor
395pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
£9.95.
0 297 78106 5

GARRY O'CONNOR

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0 340 27041 1

DIANA DEVLIN

A Speaking Part: Lewis Casson and the Theatre of his Time
276pp. Hodder and Stoughton.
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Actors spend so much of their time being other people that it is not surprising that they often seem uncertain as to who they are in themselves. They are expected to be as interesting as their best roles, but the demand is hardly reasonable: if life matched up to performance why go on the stage? The great actors have always had to put up with the fact that celebrity brings inequalities; as well as an inordinate amount of money and space is devoted to the private lives of performers that was the moderately talented may expect to be minutely examined about their domestic arrangements and gastronomic preferences. But as the transcripts of Michael Parkinson's interviews of Sir Ralph Richardson (included in Garry O'Connor's book) show - and as the recent *South Bank* Show programmes on Lord Olivier reminded us - even the best television bloodhounds are baffled by the patent gap between the private person and the stage animal.

The astute actor, of course, develops a version of himself for public display which may well make up in charm what it lacks in candour. Sir John Gielgud, for example, has evolved a highly agreeable line in urbane reminiscence which effectively deflects too close a scrutiny of the inner self. Laurence Olivier's *Confessions* may well have been promoted by a natural desire to have his life seen on his own terms. He is known to have been anxious about the prospect of being "psyched", and as an actor who has always believed in attack he has perhaps felt that a defensive strike was the best strategy. Nevertheless, Olivier's actual treatment of Ken Tynan in his book is both frank and madhouse.

Although the book has been accused of a lack of generosity to fellow artists, glowing tributes and fond asides are in fact sufficiently frequent. After all, Olivier has at one time or another worked with almost every English actor and actress of distinction during his period. In particular the value of "fifty years of incomparably varied friendship" with Ralph Richardson is acknowledged with a reciprocity that is obviously reciprocal, references to "Laurence" (never, to Olivier's surprise, "Laurence Olivier") underline the relationship. In 1926, was (as O'Connor reminds us) the basis of the Old Vic company of the later 1940s which first showed what a national theatre might look like in post-war England. The powers of the two actors were essentially complementary, and this meant that they were profoundly constructive. On the *South Bank Show* O'Connor recalled that Olivier's development of distracting business in *Henry IV, Part 2* (Olivier had decided that Shallow was a bee-keeper) was a way of saying a few sharp words about his own life without being too obvious. He was given no idea of how his acting changed as a result, if it did change. His *Confessions* will not tell other actors anything useful about their craft; Olivier has neither the intellectual nor the analytic skills of a Michael Redgrave. And the reasons behind some artistic policies remain ambiguous. In the book Olivier says that he chose to do the film of *Hamlet* in black and white so as to achieve "through depth of focus a more

Playing the private person

Stephen Wall

similar atmosphere of appreciation and eulogy: Sybil Thornike and Lewis Casson (who gave Olivier one of his first jobs) seemed to the young actor "like my second parents"; when Sybil died in her nineties, "I felt I had lost my mother all over again." Indeed, Olivier's final words on Noel Coward verge on the fulsome. It was Coward who (as one of his more substantial services to the English theatre) cured Olivier of his tendency to corpse, during the original run of *Private Lives*. Olivier adds his own testimony to the importance of George Devine, a close friend of many years. He speaks of Gielgud's Oedipus (in Peter Brook's production) as a perfect tragic performance, and of Redgrave as the definitely perfect *Vanya*. He is obviously especially proud of the younger actors whose careers were fostered by his management of the National Theatre - Frank Finlay, Albert Finney, Maggie Smith, Robert Stephens, and the others - and he takes a conjugal pleasure in the excellence of Joan Plowright.

Olivier's achievements as an actor have been so spectacular that his activities as impresario, manager and director are often somewhat eclipsed; perhaps it has been in these capacities that what Richardson referred to on television as his "sweet nature" has helped him to succeed. At any rate, what rather surprisingly emerges from his memoirs - given his colossal authority in performance - is what seems an almost compulsive habit of self-deprecation. In the *Confessions* Olivier constantly accuses himself of idiotic or inconsiderate behaviour, of having a "gift for selfishness" and of moral and physical cowardice. This last charge comes curiously from an actor whose greatest performances have often included a gratuitous physical recklessness: Mr Puff's ascent to the flies; Hamlet's final leap in the film (shot last in case of injury); Coriolanus upside-down death (illustrated but not discussed in the text).

The candour of some of Olivier's revelations about his private life may strike some as not being in the best possible taste, and he certainly does not insist on being seen in the best possible light. A sense of guilt is several times admitted to. Even professional decisions are sometimes presented equivocally; his motives in asking Osborne to write what turned out to be *The Entertainer* for him were "not exactly pure" but affected by the disintegrating state of his marriage to Vivien Leigh. Olivier thus deprives himself of some of the credit he might legitimately take for his courage in assuming, at the height of his reputation as a classical actor, a role so remote from anything his public might have expected.

The elderly Olivier's view of his earlier ventures goes with the way he demythologises some of his most celebrated histrionic effects. On television he dismissed his famous variety of false noses as simply the easiest thing to do to make yourself different. In the book he reveals that the Othello walk, featuring "those swaying hips so generously commented upon", was a lucky accident due to his memory of Alfred Lunt's criticism of the way his toes behaved when he played Oedipus twenty years before. The mechanism behind the legendary cry of anguish in that performance is indicated, but in general we are told astonishingly little about the work to which Olivier has devoted himself with such physical fervour and discipline. Some notable clichés of the self are hardly mentioned, let alone discussed (his 1945 *Astrov*, for example, of which there is however a photo, so as to compare with his 1962 version), Olivier records that he read Stanislavsky in 1926 "with great enlightenment", but we are given no idea of how his acting changed as a result, if it did change. His *Confessions* will not tell other actors anything useful about their craft; Olivier has neither the intellectual nor the analytic skills of a Michael Redgrave. And the reasons behind some artistic policies remain ambiguous. In the book Olivier says that he chose to do the film of *Hamlet* in black and white so as to achieve "through depth of focus a more

majestic, more poetic image"; on television he put it down to the fact that he was in the middle of a row with Technicolor.

It is one of the paradoxes of Olivier's personality that a very English reserve should accompany his endemic exhibitionism. He has to show off, but is fundamentally apologetic about the magnetism he cannot help. He is anxious not to seem pretentious, he only accepted his peerage at the third time of Prime Ministerial asking. He takes his work as an almost religious duty, and maybe only such a sense of vocation would have got him through the long period of stage-fright he

of Olivier's apparent need to distance or contain personal emotion. At the heart of his histrionic power there has been an element of self-awareness that almost amounts to inhibition. It is this charge of externality (about which he is clearly sensitive), but it is also this quality which makes one sense at the heart of his furiously kinetic energies a curious calm, a dry Olympian pity for the enacted character enmeshed in his own toils.

Garry O'Connor's life of Ralph Richardson makes a more tenacious effort to reach the heart of an actor's mystery - a task not made easier by his



Laurence Olivier, aged 14, as Katharine in *The Taming of the Shrew*, reproduced from his autobiography reviewed here.

suffered during the 1960s; nevertheless he is uneasy about taking himself too seriously. It is not surprising therefore that the book's tone is chronically unstable, and its coverage patchy. The reminiscences of an actor who will surely figure as the successor to Garrick, Keen, and Irving cannot be without interest, and the pages are always readable if not always comfortable. Theatricality, Olivier is the supreme master of irony, and it is to him that he often resorts and even clings here, but it is not expressed with much finesse of phrase; the colloquialism of the prose often suggests a tape-recorder transcript or a re-worked diary. The illnesses of his later years, against which Olivier has struggled with exemplary fortitude, are recorded with excessive detail; elsewhere, as with the circumstances accompanying his disassociation from the National Theatre, we are fobbed off with an account that is flimsy and obscure.

It is a relief therefore to find the rare passage in which Olivier's description of his own powers corresponds with what those with first-hand knowledge of them can vouch for. At the time of the 1954-55 Stratford season (Macbeth, Malvolio, Titus) he says: "I had at the time . . . lungs like organbellows, vocal power and range that no infection could seem to affect, and bodily expression balanced by a technique that could control all physical expressiveness from dead stillness to an almost acrobatic agility . . . I had a Shakespeare-trained intellect, and had come to terms with the verse-speaking problem by reaching the truth behind the text through the verse - never ignoring it, never essential, but working in harmony with the inherent fabric, rhythm, beat, with full awareness of all the poetic values and nuances."

In another actor, this might seem vain; with Olivier, though, who saw him know it is true. Typically, the passage is immediately followed by an embarrassing apology for such exultation - inserted perhaps because

subject's constitutional evasiveness. Richardson's response to biographical approaches is to maintain that there is "nothing to say" about acting and "nothing to write about" in his life as an actor - an odd Beckettian note from one who, to his later regret, turned down the chance of appearing in the first English *Godot*. O'Connor dramatizes his chronological account of Richardson's long career (he began to act in 1920) with accounts of his own interviews with him in 1979. These give us a pleasant sense of the way Sir Ralph is now playing himself but allow us virtually no authorized access to the interior of someone who has carried inscrutability to the point of idiosyncrasy. Indeed, the main interest of this study lies in the author's theory that Richardson has spent his life inventing the character that bears his name. With such a perspective it is not surprising that much emphasis falls on Richardson's performances of those roles in which self-creation is central: Peer Gynt, Falstaff, and latterly Kichen in David Storey's *Early Days*. Richardson was, rehearsing, and performing, this play at the time O'Connor was preparing his book, and it forms a convenient if perhaps overstressed climax to it. The author seems over-eager to persuade us that he has reached the heart of the onion.

Nevertheless, Ralph Richardson has considerable value as a record of the career of an actor of extraordinary resourcefulness whose intuitions have profoundly influenced not only Olivier and Gielgud, the greatest of his contemporaries, but many others. He is in a special sense an actor's actor. O'Connor has drawn on the memories of fellow artists as well as on a variety of other sources, but diligent collation does not bog his narrative down in mere chronology. He has little option, however, but to leave certain areas of Richardson's life unexplored. The tragedy of his first marriage to Kit Hewitt (a touching *Ophelia*, by all accounts, in the modern-dress *Hamlet* of 1925) is recorded, but we are largely left to imagine its after-effects. Kit Hewitt contracted sleeping sickness in 1927 and remained totally disabled by it until she died in 1942. Again, Richardson or has been a Catholic, but his religious sense is only briefly touched on. There are, however, many agreeable trivial anecdotes. Sir Ralph's integrity as a motor-cyclist is well known, but it was apparently exceeded by Olivier's reckless car-driving in their early days: they once touched 85 mph going down Piccadilly. When the two friends were playing *Othello* in 1938, Olivier and Tyrone Guthrie (after clandestine consultation with the Freudian Ernest Jones) had decided that the Ancient was in love with the Moor. In rehearsal Olivier, as Iago, flung his arms round Ralph's neck and kissed him. "whereat Ralph . . . sort of patted me and said 'Dear fellow dear boy', much more pitying me for having lost control of myself than despising me for being a very bad actor."

Older theatre-goers will remember Lewis Casson's long and distinguished career (one of his last parts was in Olivier's *Chichester Vanya*), but those who never saw him can now turn to Diana Devlin's sympathetic if rather pedestrian biography, *A Speaking Part*. Casson's commitment to his profession and to a wider, socialist vision of society in which drama would be taken at its proper high value are fully brought out. It is a tribute to his integrity that his life should have been so closely and continuously bound up with the more important developments in the theatre of his time. He was one of the actors who made our national theatre(s) possible. His first appearance was in 1899, in a revival of *The Alchemist* directed by Poel. He was a member of Granville-Barker's Court Theatre company during its most influential period. Shaw invited him to play in *Man and Superman*. Casson's association with, and allegiance to these figures was to remain a vital element in his theatrical practice, but this was crossed with a love of the exalted style of Greek tragedy in Gilbert Murray's translations (Casson specialized in Messengers parts). His first production was *The Persians* (1904), his last *Electra* (1946). When Granville-Barker briefly emerged from his seclusion to work on *Lea* with Gielgud in 1940, Casson was his co-director. In partnership with Shaw he directed the original *Saint Joan*. Here of course, as throughout his life, he worked with his wife, Sybil Thornike, whom he had married in 1908; they became, as Olivier puts it, "the most respected couple in any theatre ever".

Casson was not just a metropolitan actor. Before 1914 he had an important spell with Miss Horniman's famous Manchester company and ran a company in Glasgow; between the wars and after 1945 he undertook long and arduous tours all over the world. He was a manager of distinction as well as a director of immense experience and strong-mindedness. He was party to many of the moves towards a national theatre, and during the last war was both President of Equity and Drama. Director of CEMA, Diana Devlin is Casson's grand-daughter and she is able to give us an inside picture of the private and family man as well as of a public life of dignity and value.

Both as an actor and as a director, Lewis Casson gave great attention to the voice; in him, as in his wife, one heard the full carrying diction of an older school put to the service of a modern view of the theatre's work. Olivier recalls that when he developed the bass register of his voice, to play Othello, Casson revealingly told him that he had thus opened up "a whole new side to your personality; to your career. If you want it, Casson's experience of the Olivier timbre was not, in 1964, a new one. Sybil Thornike recalled that at the time of the *pye-wan* *Coriolanus* already mentioned by Casson and Olivier used to have breath-competition which the younger man usually won. "Larry" could do the Matins exhortation "Dearly Beloved Brethren" twice through in one breath. Lewis could do it one and a half times, and my father (once). "Dearly Sybil's father, like (Olivier's) was a clergyman." In the theatre, after all, breath is power, and the actor with the most breath has the most power.

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representations

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— Clifford Geertz

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Zero summing up

Sean French

TERRY CASTLE

Clarissa's Cipher: Meaning and Disruption in Richardson's Clarissa
201pp. Cornell University Press.
£13.25.
0 8014 1495 4

Terry Castle begins her study with the misplaced confidence of a flat-earthier. Her book is, she claims, "a gloss for a single line of *Clarissa*". The problem is that she has quite simply and demonstrably misunderstood this crucial line: "When *Clarissa* is held captive by Lovelace she writes to her sisterly friend Anna Howe lamenting:

I am but a cypher, to give him significance, and myself pain. According to Castle, *Clarissa* has uncovered "the crucial metaphor of reading". She has become a cipher of Lovelace, a sort of text - and he, her egegete, "*Clarissa* Harlowe" is but a sign - the letter - from which, obscurely, he takes away significance. In fact, it is not as obscure as all that. The small pocket dictionary would have told Castle that "cypher" cannot possibly mean a "sign", here - a sign to which Lovelace, that "proto-semiologist, must give significance". It can mean "nothing, no importance, or worth" (*OED*). But it is obvious in this context that this is a figurative use of its primary meaning, the numerical symbol zero (0). The peculiar quality of zero is that, while of

no value on its own, it multiplies any figure after which it is placed by ten. *OED* cites Polkenes in *The Winter's Tale* (I.ii. 6-9), who compels Lantana Leontes after his long stay with "And therefore, like a cipher, I'll stand in rich place), to multiply, / With 'one' 'We thank you' many thousands more / That go before it". The other numerals (1-9) are known as "significant" numbers, which explains the rest of the sentence. *Clarissa* is a zero, increasing the importance of the significant number Lovelace.

Castle believes that "any sign system is ultimately arbitrary in significance" and that "Readers produce meaning for the text". *Clarissa* is an embodiment of this theory; it "thematises the denatured status of texts and the anarchy of readers". The letters which form the novel are "indeterminate linguistic structure[s]", and we the readers project meaning onto, rather than retrieve meaning from, the text. *Clarissa*'s mistake, it seems, is to believe that language bears a mimetic relation to the world; whereas Lovelace, like Humpty Dumpty, sees that he can make words from what he wants them to mean. Ironically she herself becomes a "cipher", in Castle's sense, the novel's other characters "stimulating her with violence is a parallel to the actual violence of power and *Clarissa*'s discourse remains a fragmentary, futile utterance subject to the radical incursions of a more potent collective rhetoric - the patriarchal discourse of the Harlowes and Lovelace. The most revealing aspect of Castle's

theory of linguistic indeterminacy (and one that should have caused her at least some disquiet) is that it forces her to slide with all the novel's villainous elements. Lovelace and Arabella (*Clarissa*'s sister) are well aware of the arbitrariness of signification because they make use of it by lying all the time. Castle has the nerve to support her argument against *Clarissa* by quoting Arabella, which is like convicting *Clarissa* on the evidence of the *Ugly Sisters*. Throughout she reserves a strictest course for any form of deceptiveness. *Clarissa*'s kind nature is "compulsive benevolence", her conviction about the value of "being sister" is part of a "sentimental ideology of kinship". As far as the novel goes, it is clear that hermeneutically speaking *Clarissa* was asking for it.

For Castle the epistolary form of the novel is both chaotically free from authorial control and so artificial that we cannot possibly connect it with reality. She is saying it - as Lovelace might say - both ways. Richardson's sense that he does not put "the pen to paper" is a moral and an aesthetic question. We may keep *Clarissa* as a fiction, but we may keep *Clarissa* as always right to refuse that it resembles the sort of her that art has taught us to admire, then to mock, then to worse for art. If we want Lovelace to marry *Clarissa*, then we do not represent her as a free woman. *Clarissa* would have to be but, our corrupt and trivial expectations.

remainders

Eric Korn

I must not confuse Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, as Mr Gupta (Letters, October 10) courteously points out. It was a mere slip of the cortex on my part, for I had a linguistic atlas in front of me when I wrote and was indeed on the point of making a knowing pun about Cochín and its suburb Mattancheri ("Bonjour, Cochón", something along those lines) when wiser counsels prevailed. By way of penance I have been studying Tamil. It is true that Tamil is not spoken in either Andhra Pradesh or Kerala, but my only source for a Malayalam grammar is rather dismissive, describing it condescendingly as "sanskritized Tamil with the personal terminations dropped", though it admits that "remains of them are said to be found among the Mohaphs of South Canara". (There's a divinity that shapes our personal terminations, rough-hew them how we will, and the Mohaphs, I discover, are Malabari Muslims; readers of John Buchan may recall the Bright Young Things disparagingly called Mohaphs in *Three Hostages* though, it transpired, they had sterling qualities of character under their strident exteriors.) This was discouraging enough, and still more discouraging was the specimen - parable of the Prodigal Son - with a literal back translation: "But this brother dead-man had-become, again revived; not-seeing gooder had-become, seeing-reaching-being-because we having-been-merry-to-feast-wanted-being-is-it-not?"

So I am postponing Malayalam until the arrival of the long-awaited volume in the Teach Yourself series, by Professor Ramakrishna Margola of Cochín U. The provisional title is *Ram. Margola's Malayalam solo Grammar* (Palindrome Press 6.99).

I didn't get on much better with Telugu, or Telogoo, as my Victorian authority prettily calls it, though it is one of the specimens dissected by Thomas Prendergast (formerly of Madras) in his *Mastery of Languages or the Art of speaking Foreign Tongues Idiomatically*. His chief dogmas are: Don't Go Abroad, Don't Read Grammars, avoid seeing or hearing one word in excess of those which you are actually engaged in committing to memory. Children don't use grammars, Prendergast reasonably observes, and illustrates Telugu, without straining the reader's memory, by the reasonable but plainly mad device of attaching Telugu endings to Latin words. (Tu munda librum non vidi.) He then offers three everyday sentences, one of which is "Tell the horsekeeper to take away my horse to the stable, because, by your carelessness I have been prevented from going out to ride this morning." The words are all numbered and a handsome chart ("the labyrinth diagram exhibiting the evolution of

sentences") shows how very many sentences, many of them fresh and meaningful, you can make, simply by shifting the words about.

"A palaeoChomskian generative deep grammar!" I hear you cry? Indeed, and in an appendix Prendergast speaks of his friend Mr Long, who has made "a machine of an singularly ingenious construction": an apparatus which when turned on its axis exhibits an "endless succession of the variations of four sentences each of twenty-one words". Not content with this Laputan computer, Long loads his machine with musical phrases and invents the first synthesizer, a sort of Ur-Moog.

That left Tamil, and passing over a book gnomically called *Inge Va or the Shma Durai's Pocket Tamil Guide* ("go to the river bank and cut three hundred bushels of mana grass") I came with relief on the genial Mr Jegtheesh, author of *Tamil in thirty days through English*. Mr Jegtheesh explains that he didn't really mean to write the book at all, gives some not very helpful pronunciation hints ("as in elephant"), and then races to the list of everyday words: water, fruit, meat, tank, thief, plai, army... plai? look it up in the Tamil-English section, yes: a plai or elevated veranda. Jegtheesh's list of birds and beasts is calculated to sow confusion (*cheval* a cock, *Koku* a crane, *poude* a tiger), but his fruit are engaging: mango, grapes, fig, quava, melon, poma-granite, wood-apple, pumple.

Pumple is the English for *puppallimasa*, which excited me, but the OED is very scathing about people who imagine that this is the original word for grapefruit, rather than a South Indian corruption of the Dutch word of which the first half probably means pumpkin, while the second half is the Dutch transcription of the Old Javanese distortion of the Portuguese version of "lemon" (but you probably knew that). So pumpkin-lemon becomes pomelo- (or pumple- or pample-) moose or moss, or moes or mus or mouse, "which our sailors commonly call pumplemoose" to say nothing of pumplemoose and pamplemoose, which have clearly gone far afield. (And "grapefruit" is almost too recent to get into the main OED at all, scraping in as a curious American way of saying "forbidden fruit", or, of course, "pamplemoose".) Meanwhile back at *Tamil in thirty days*, we are put through some brisk imperative exercises: Put the Flower; Give the Pen; Close the Eye; Help the Poor; Shew a Shirt; enough, with the next lesson on sentence structure (the stars twinkle; the sea water is saline) to generate a wide variety of simple poems.

In the conversational section ("learn these sentences, even if you get them by heart. Then you can go round Tamil

Nad talking to the people") we get guidance in etiquette as well. Will you share the lunch with me? Here is Idoli, take them. Idoli is specialized food item in Tamil Nadu. We Americans know the high culture of Tamil Nadu. What luggages have you? There are two suitcases and one bed. I am glad you take much interest in Tamil Language though you are a foreigner.

Said foreigner, knowing what is good for him, does not stint the praise: "O What a beautiful Beach. A Magnificent building. I have heard of the fame of this University." At Mahabalipuram he lays it on a little thick: "Yonder, I see an elephant. How did it come here? It is not a true elephant, it is a monolithic sculpture. My eyes deceived me, the deftness of the hands of the sculptor is something marvellous. My eyes are drinking deep in their beauty." Consistent flattery gets the tourist invited home ("My wife is a graduate. She is an adept in Cookery also." "You are a fortunate man"), where he surpasses himself. "What is your opinion about the Tamilians?" The civilization of the Tamilians will not die as long as the world exists.

And now it's time for revision of the hundred most important words ("loudly," suggests Mr Jegtheesh). So I'm wandering the streets in a Coromandel dream, shouting Cheetha Patha, Velepudu, Thalavale (Dysentery, Flt, Headache), Marppohr, EE, Muthalale (Wrestling, Fly, Capitalist), All, Challe, Kollilu (Lily, Phlegm, Horsegram...).

I also stumbled over *Rubajates e Omar Khayyam*, a translation of FitzGerald into Albanian, by Ruzhiti Bilbil Grahsmi. Mr. Grahsmi, if perhaps (Mr. Ruzhiti) preserves the FitzGerald rhythms (which would no doubt be recognizable in Marbut or Beretjergues); there are guessable exclamations like *Negrehul* or *Zeghul* I thought I'd sold it long ago and whenever Khayyamsists approached me and asked for anything, no matter how obscure, I'd say casually "if booksellers will, it's surprising how few are murdered." I've just sold the Albanian translation, I bet you'd have like that." Now that I've found it, of course, they will complain that it is the wrong dialect, Ghëg when they only

collect Tosk, or Tosk when all they are after is Ghëg.

When I used to deal in modern first editions, in the far off days of the late 1970s, modern meant (or it did to me) reliable chaps like Belloc and Conrad and Kipling, chaps who'd been modern for quite a long time. Some of them were not read much, which kept the prices nice and low, but didn't otherwise hurt business. Now, perusing, slack-jawed, American trade journals, I see challenging prices on fellows far too new to be modern, Coover and Barth and Barthelme and Gass and McMurtry and Howard (Howard?). And we're talking not tens but hundreds. Among British writers, I was told last month, the hottest properties, Trans-Atlantic-wise, are Dick Francis and Shiva Naipaul. But don't rush: that was last month. Meanwhile, the first edition of *Waterproof Down* holds its price, if not the price of a small car at least that of a medium-sized motorcycle. This is a classic example of a genuinely scarce book (provincial publisher, small printing, delayed acclaim) which is very easy to find, simply by holding the right number of tenners in the air while intoning "rabbits, rabbits". It's one way of making a fast buck or a pile of... On the other hand, there are plenty of books that must be common but are impossible to find: second impressions are generally larger than first editions, but how do you locate them?

That same US catalogue was crammed with some of the least desirable titles in the whole galaxy or black hole of bibliography: a Book Club edition of Anais Nin's *Delta of Venus*, "Taylor E (Movie Actress) Nibbles and Me, story of a pet chipmunk", *The mine of Meredith* (tipped in by coloured plates); "46 views of assorted Okla towns, Most from \$275", "Large Botanical print with 35 variety of X-Mas mushrooms, perfect X-Mas present, sure to increase in value", *Pappy Ott and the Tinting Tote*, by the author of *Pappy Ott and the Prancing Pancake* (newly rebound). Choice of the least engaging description is a very intimate matter, but "with letter from author commenting on lack of interest in Alaskan flora" must be in there with a chance.

Tamilians are not the only people who take their culture gravely; along the expressway into Toronto a flashing sign said "Canadian Culture on Sale Monday". But it was only another such thing would hardly make the neons over here. Canadian culture is in a very healthy condition, thank you,

despite a certain tendency to equate the adjectives "Canadian" and "human", most memorably illustrated in our medical correspondence warning: "I urge Canadians never to sit on public toilet seats." (What about the woman of the 1980s mind more Herpes and queues.) Much more salutary is the tale of the Snow Goose. The Snow Goose, as the name suggests, are Canada Geese, or rather life-size styrofoam models laminated with photographs of feathers, created by Michael Snow and fluttering by up near the roof, below the lost balloon, in the Eaton Center, a vast and jolly multi-storey gallery of shops, emporia, boutiques, and other places where things are sold to those who wish to buy. The sculptures were paid for by an impressive consortium of benefactors, including banks, property dealers, Minicature, and Windows, which is a lottery. The wretched purchaser, in the interests of increasing Christmas jollity, has given each goose a cheery red muffer tied about its neck. The goose, too, is to be tied to bed. He's threatening to sue all and sundry, and by the by provisions of local law, he can do so, retaining a sufficient lien on his creations to forbid public goose abuse.

I was in a place that sold tea-shirts the other day...

You mean tee-shirts I suppose. No, these were tea-shirts. They were inscribed with things like EARL GREY RULES O.K., OOLONG BELONGS TO ME, I (heart) NUWARA ELIYA, I'M TEAPOTTY (also available in Greek), LETS MINCE DOWN MINCING LANE, LAPSPANG U, and I'M A FLOWERY ORANGE PEKOE FREAKO. The coffee merchants are striking back with JAVA COFFEE THIS MORNING? and - a bit dastardly - STRONG DRINK IS A MOCKER. MOCHA IS A STRONG DRINK.

Well-intentioned persons who observe me spending profitless weeks alternately hunting for the book I have just offered someone and the address of the someone to whom I have just offered a book, suggest frequently that I should equip myself with a business computer, one programmed to find customers, write catalogues, read other booksellers' catalogues (transmitted by landline from bank computers) and order books and adjust bank balances accordingly. The difficulty is that if you make book-keeping a thing of the past, you may make books a thing of the past. In seasonal terms, if you're a turkey, don't cultivate cranberries.

Fifty years on: Rummy

The TLS of December 22, 1932, carried the following review of Rummy: That Noble Game by A. E. Coppard and Robert Gibbins:

If it is wondering you might be why a game of cards should be called Rummy you will not be finding an answer in Mr Coppard's book. And if you asked himself he would maybe answer, like the boy who screwed the tail of his horse on the Cap of Dunloe: "Why is this game called the Gap of Dunloe? asked Mr Coppard. "Well," he said, "that is the name of it, you see."

Rummy is the name of this game. And the name of the book between the woodcuts on the title-page is "Rummy: That Noble Game, expounded in prose, poetry" - four lines by Mr Coppard (profoundly philosophical, not expository) and one by Mr. Walt Whitman "diagram and engraving, by A. E. Coppard and Robert Gibbins, with an account of certain diversions into the mountain fastnesses of Cork and Kerry." It is a good game; his opponent is to be trusted, invented a number of local (Whitman) rules it was a simple game - one that might be sandwiched in a handbook between a page or two on old Maid or Coon Can

and an appendix on the Elements of Cartomancy. Indeed the rules are so simple that even Mr Coppard, who is susceptible to national influences and falls into circumlocution in Ireland as naturally as the card-sharper falls into friendship with whatever company may share his compartment from Cork to Clare, takes only three pages to describe them. But the game is an admirable hook on which to hang the diversions - the walks and climbs, the discomforts, the scenery and the oddities of the native population. Local rules caused bitterness between author and artist, if both cheated over their I.O.U.s. If there is some disagreement about Mr. Coppard's courage as a mountaineer - still, these two inveterate gamblers made as priority a pair of explorers as ever braved the rains and bogs of Kerry. Something they agreed, not in their opinions of each other's personal appearance, it is true - but here Mr Gibbins has his grace to picture both opinions of both; but they agreed in their praise of grand Mr Fitz and his lovely wife, and they both accepted Mr Fitz's reason for continuing to fish when he could not bear the loach or taste of trout nor the smell of them cooking. "It's sport," he gravely explained; "I do not like leaving them in all that water."

Author, Author

Competition No 102. Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than January 14. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or falling that its most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration. Entries, marked "Author, Author 102" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on January 21.

1 "I Was Inquiring," said Mr. resuming the thread of his discourse; "Whether You Have Observed in my Street as We Would say, Upon our Party as You would say, any Tokens?"

The foreign gentleman, with patient courtesy entreated pardon; "But what was I asked?"

"Mark," said Mr. "Signs you know, Appearance - Traces."

"Ah! Of a Horse?" inquired the foreign gentleman.

"Water, a whisky."

"A base whisky. Every time I take it into my mouth my stomach rises

against it, and the stuff they keep here is sure to be particularly vile. I only ordered it because I am going to write about an Englishman. We French are incredibly old-fashioned and out of date still in some ways. I wonder I didn't ask him at the same time for a pair of tweed knickerbockers, a pipe, some long teeth, and a set of ginger whiskers."

"And pray," said the Captain, "why did you go to a public place without an Englishman?"

"Me, for, Sir," answered he, "because none of my acquaintance is in town."

"Why then," said he, "I'll tell you what; your best way is to go out of it yourself."

"Pardie, Monsieur," returned he, "and so I shall; for, I promise you, I think the English a parcel of brutes; and I'll go back to France as fast as I can; for I would not live among none of you."

Competition No 98. Winner: Mr. A. A. Staunton.

Answers:

1 The house was bad in all respects, but it might have passed if they had only let it alone. This saying means: beyond them; they had embroiled it with trumpery, ornament and

scrabop art, with strange excrescences and buncy draperies, with gimcracks that might have been appliances for maid-servants and nondescript conveniences that might have been prizes for the blind.

Henry James, *The Spoils of Poynton*, chapter 1.

2 Everything in the room is like that: unnecessarily solid, abnormally heavy and dangerously sharp. Here, at the writing-table, I am confronted by a phalanx of metal objects - a pair of candlesticks shaped like entwined serpents, an ashtray from which emerges the head of a crocodile, a paper-knife copied from a Florentine dagger, a brass dolphin holding on the end of its tail a small broken clock. Christopher Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin*.

3 On a low stool stood a work-bag made out of a baby's smock. Gathered cherry satin now took the place of guts, entrails and organs; and needle-cases, glittering scissors, tools of coloured thread, lay neatly in their separate compartments. Only the back and head and paw and tail of the armadillo remained.

Denton Welch, *In Youth is Pleasure*, chapter 3.

to the editor

Politics in the Metropolis

Sir, - In his review (December 3) of *Metropolis: Politics and Urban Change, 1837-1981* by myself and Patricia Garside, F. M. L. Thompson misses a number of important points. We make it clear in the book that our account of changing London is necessarily selective. Our primary concern is with the reciprocal political and urban change: with the ways in which the politics of policy have shaped the patterns of metropolitan life and with the ways in which changes in the structure of the metropolis find expression in the political arena. Thompson has based upon the first of these the evolution of the second.

So simple and unilinear a view (which we ourselves are at pains to avoid) leads Thompson to the extraordinary judgment that "while fewer and fewer (Londoners) took part in elections... the formation of the GLC reflects the decline in popular interest". Not so. Much of the GLC's decline in electoral turnout since 1910 - discussed at length in my *Local Politics and the Rise of Party* - is attributed to the selective migration of London's middle class to the rapidly growing suburbs; propensity to vote varies with social class. Similarly, the higher average turnout in Greater London elections since 1964 is largely attributable to the inclusion of these new suburbs. Within most of inner London - the old LCC area - turnout fell 1964. So much for the resurgence of the civic spirit.

Professor Thompson is perhaps too ready to dismiss our conclusion that partisan advantage underlay the election of the GLC. A glance at our very extensive listing of the primary sources would confirm that we had full access to the papers of the various committees within the Conservative party organization from the late nineteenth century to the late 1970s. Moreover, we interviewed most of the politicians and party officials involved

in the 1960s re-organization, with the exception of the then prime minister and party chairman. I think our conclusion - which itself revises earlier views of the inexorable logic of metropolitan "reform" - is grounded in the best available sources. I see little reason to "hedge our bets" until 1990.

This last is no mere quibble over historical interpretation. The continued existence of the GLC and, by extension, that of the provincial metropolitan counties cannot be taken for granted. We have argued that in creating the GLC in 1964 the government of the day erected a monument to an Edwardian ideal of metropolitan governance; too late by half a century to shape the pattern of London's development, the GLC fares badly when judged on the subsequent record. The next stage in London government is likely to be a federal one, with joint inter-borough machinery and a closer involvement by teams of Whitehall officials. The writing is on the wall for the GLC and its provincial counterparts; our book seeks to show just why Britain's first experiment in metropolitan governance has been of such limited success and so poorly supported.

KEN YOUNG.
Policy Studies Institute, 1-2 Castle Lane, London SW1.

Arthur Waley

Sir, - May I commend the review (October 15) of my book *A Half of Two Lives* by Hermione Lee for its unusual degree of perception in that it does not appear to regard Arthur Waley as a man in any way "diminished" by his heroic handling of a sad and tragic situation, but rather as one of rare scholarship; and even rarer integrity? Had Arthur confined to me the reason put out only recently by his nephew Daniel Waley for Beryl de Zolte's many extraordinary behaviours, no act of mine would have been different: my husband's problems would have remained uncommunicated and faithfully guarded. I wished many times that I could

have known Beryl de Zolte in the early pre-war period referred to by Helen Blacker (Letters, November 26) but I was travelling far afield - Spain, Australasia, America, the Caribbean - with my first husband, Hugh Ferguson Robinson, whom I married in 1931. I did not, then, meet Beryl until 1953 when she was well into her seventies - and no doubt in an extreme of what I now understand to be an appalling and an accelerating disease. The attacks at this time were entirely unpredictable. It was an appalling period.

Further, I certainly agree with A. M. Birrell (Letters, October 29) that the correspondence secured by Rutgers University through the agency of Peter Eaton might throw a happier light over the relationship of (to borrow the indubitably accurate words of Carmen Blacker) "two remarkable minds" also that it should be published in its entirety. This last might prove a formidable task since Professor Ivan Morris (late of Columbia University, New York, and editor of *Madly Singing in the Mountains: An Appreciation and Anthology of Arthur Waley*, George Allen and Unwin, 1970) on seeing one box which contained letters remarked that he had seen sixty or so such at Rutgers. However, Mr C. E. Johns (of Rutgers Library) has now had sixteen years in which to apply himself to the task, and such a publication should be of enormous importance and value. Incidentally, in the year of my husband's death I wrote requesting a copy of the Catalogue as advertised available by Rutgers Journal; but was told that this had been withdrawn at the request of Hubert Waley, Arthur's younger brother.

Finally, the carefully recorded incidents of a life, written down at the time of their happening with essential gaps of months and years between (I returned to England in 1942), pressed now by Carmen Blacker into a single paragraph, do indeed make strange reading. But I have no talent - and a very restricted taste - for fiction.

ALISON WALEY.
50 Southwood Lane, Highgate Village, London N6.

Information, please

Australian quotations: as editor of the first standard *Dictionary of Australian Quotations*, I should be grateful for suggestions of quotations dealing with Australia from any source; precise locations desirable.

Stephen Murray-Smith, School of Education, University of Melbourne, Parkville 3052, Victoria, Australia.

Winnipeg, who worked in Angola during the 1930s, probably in commerce, and whose photographic album of tribal life were donated to the Royal Anthropological Institute after his death in 1952; any information about his life and work.

Linda Hunt, Royal Anthropological Institute, 26 Queen Anne Street, London W1.

Women's Outlook: the women's magazine of the English Co-operative Movement; whereabouts of any surviving complete run; for a study of the Women's Co-operative Guild.

Naomi Black, Department of Political Science, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Downsview, Ontario, Canada M3J 1P3.

Documents on Russia and the Soviet Union: whereabouts of: private papers, letters, diaries, business records, literary manuscripts, photographs relating to Russia or the Soviet Union; for a survey of documentary and manuscript material in Britain.

Janet M. Hartley, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1.

Edward James Wilson (1872-1854), landscape and antiquary; whereabouts of any material formerly in his Lincoln Collection, except items in the custody of the Society of Antiquaries and Lincoln Cathedral Library; information needed for a catalogue of the collection.

C. P. C. Johnson, Lincolnshire Archives Offices, The Castle, Lincoln.

Lady John Scott of Spottiswoode (1810-1900): whereabouts of journal and sketchbooks.

D. H. Ferguson, 29 St Ninian's Way, Lintilghow, West Lothian EH49 7BU.

Thomas Dekker: any information about professional or amateur performances of his plays, 1970-82; for a research project.

Oliver Duke, 6 West Queen Street, West Ferry, Dundee DD5 1AR.

Hugh Kelly (1739-77), journalist (*Public Ledger*, *Courier Magazine*, *Court Miscellany*, *Royal Chronicle* of 1762, *Owen's Weekly Chronicle*) and playwright: whereabouts, either in private hands or not listed in standard sources of manuscripts, letters, journals, account books, bills, other relevant papers, and connection with J. Newbery, publisher.

Robert R. Battelle, 203 Ross Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50010.

Eric Linklater: letters, documents or personal reminiscences: for a biography.

Michael Parnell, 6 Fields Park Road, Pontcanna, Cardiff CF1 9JP.

George Mushet (b 1782), whose diary now resides in the University of Birmingham library; contact with any direct descendants.

R. M. Healey, South Wing, Cokerach House, Berkway, Royaton, Hertfordshire.

"Oxford Style" of rowing, said to have been current in the 1890s; information sought on the meaning of the term; for a biography of Arthur Charles Campbell Thorold.

Christine Cowham, 15 Guy Court, King Steel, Oxford.

Anne Estelle Rice (1879-1959), American-born painter active in Paris and London during the early twentieth century: correspondence, photographs or other memorabilia and works of art; for research purposes.

Carol A. Nathanson, Department of Art and Art History, Creative Arts Center, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio 45335.

Leitch Ritchie, author of *Wanderings by the Seine* (Longman, 1834), *Health's Pleasures Annual*, etc: any information about this author.

Eric D. Sydenham, The Wolf House, Windsor Road, Gerrard's Cross, Buckinghamshire.

Gabrielle Enthoven (1868-1950), theatre historian, dramatist, actress: information about her social life and friendships; for a study of 1920s literary life.

Michael Baker, 49 Clarendon Drive, London SW15.

René Wellek's The Attack on Literature and Other Essays, which was noticed in our issue of December 10, will appear in an English edition from Harvester Press on January 20 next, priced at £18.95 hardback and £5.95 paperback.

Chatto and Windus have pointed out that both Darlington's edition of *The Love Letters of William and Mary Wordsworth*, reviewed in our issue of December 3, prints the twenty-four letters exchanged in 1812 in addition to the seven of 1810 published last year in facsimile by Scolar Press; and is also annotated.

Charles Babbage

Sir, - H. C. Longuet-Higgins's interesting review (November 26) of the book on Charles Babbage by Anthony Hyman reminds me of a reference to Babbage's book *The Economy of Manufacture* (1832); it was reviewed in *The Times* shortly after it appeared.

Those people who complain about delays in postal delivery may like to know of Babbage's practical suggestion. In 1832 delays were considerable because of horse-drawn transport. Why, then, depend on it? Why not construct pillars along the railroad, the pillars to be connected by inclined iron rods along which the letters, enclosed in cylinders and attached to the rods by rings, could slide. An official of the post office would remain at each pillar in order to extract the cylinder for the locality and would forward cylinders for other districts. Babbage calculated that if this system were set up in a network all over the country letters could travel long distances in short periods of time: from London to York, for instance, in an hour or two. In the inner centres of cities church steeples could be brought into use.

Your reviewer says that "Charles Babbage might easily have been forgotten by history." If his system had been taken up, and if it had worked satisfactorily as he suggested, then his name would be a household word. Like Rowland Hill's name: Rowland Hill's Penny Post, founded in 1840, did last to a time within living memory. I wish Charles Babbage had been treated seriously, but it is too late now to put up that network of pillars with inclined rods.

K. H. STRANGE.
3 Calverley Park Crescent, Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

Swaddies

Sir, - I am sorry if I have given W. E. Bowman (Letters, November 26) the impression that I used "swaddy" in ignorance of its derivation. In fact, I share his interest in such matters. But I felt that "swaddy" summed up economically James Bodell's personality and behaviour for readers in his *Dictionary of*

Slang calls this "an occasional perversion of swaddy", rare before this century. "Swad" and "swadkin", which he also gives, he was able to trace back as far as 1708, and he thinks that the derivation may be from "swad, a bumpkin, a lout".

The SOED thinks that "swad" may derive from the Norwegian dialect *svadde*, "big stout fellow". I would suggest that "swaddy" and the modern jibe at a bucolic type, "swede", are both corruptions of this word, which was in use two centuries before the introduction of the Swedish turnip.

RANDOLPH STOW.
28 King's Head Street, Harwich, Essex.

Buer

Sir, - Julian Symons (October 8) and Derek Elston (Letters, November 26) are mistaken in supposing that this cant word for "woman" is not listed by Eric Partridge; it occurs under the spelling *bewer* in both his *Dictionary of Slang* and his *Dictionary of the Underworld*, the latter having quite a full entry, in which Partridge suggests it originates in Shelta (the Irish tinkers' jargon). It is also recorded as *bewer* in *A Dictionary of Slang, Jargon and Cant* by Albert Barrère and Charles G. Leland (1889), where it is called "tinker's slang".

D. A. H. EVANS.
Department of English, University College, Dublin.

'Re-reading English'

Sir, - May I be permitted to correct two misprints which crept into my review (December 10) of *Re-reading English*, edited by Peter Widdowson, after I had read proof? *Difference* should have read *difference*, and *annus mirabilis* was misspelled, two errors which might seem a bit hapless in view of my comments about the usefulness of knowing foreign languages.

CLAUDE RAWSON.
Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry.

Among this week's contributors

JAMES BARR is Regius Professor of Hebrew at the University of Oxford.

D. J. ENRIGHT's *Collected Poems* were published in 1981.

GAVIN EWART's *The New Ewart: Poems 1980-1982* was published earlier this year.

KYRIL FITZLYON's most recent book is *Before the Revolution*, 1978.

JAMES GRIFFIN is a Fellow of Keble College, Oxford.

HAROLD HOBSON is an Honorary Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford.

RICHARD HOUGH's books include *Fighting Ships*, 1969.

MICHAEL IRWIN is a lecturer in English at the University of Kent.

PAUL JENNINGS's books include *And Now For Something Exactly the Same. The Book of Nonsense and I Must Have Imagined It*, all 1977.

JONATHAN KRATZ teaches English at City of London School.

PETER KEAR's *H. G. Wells and the Culminating Age* will be reviewed in a future issue of the TLS.

MARY LEFKOWITZ's books include *Heroines and Hybrids and The Lives of the Greek Poets*, both 1981.

ANTHONY LEVI is the author of *French Moralists*, 1963.

BRIAN MASTERS's *Great Hostesses* was published earlier this year.

JOHN NORTH is Professor of the History of Science at the University of Groningen.

HEATHER O'DONOGHUE is a Fellow of Somerville College, Oxford.

S. S. PRAWER's *Karl Marx and World Literature* was published in 1976.

PETER RADGROVE's most recent collection of poems is *The Apple-Broad-cast*, 1981.

BRIAN ROBERTS's most recent book, *The Mad Bad Line*, was published in 1981.

LORNA SAGE is a lecturer in English at the University of East Anglia.

PRUE SHAW is a lecturer in Italian at the University of Cambridge.

JULIAN SYMONS's most recent book is *Critical Observations*, 1981.

STEPHEN WALL is a Fellow of Keble College, Oxford.

CHRIS WALLACE-CRABER's collection of poems includes *The Emotions Are Not Stilled Workers*, 1980.

MARY WARNOCK's books include *Schools of Thought*, 1977.

JOHN WALLACK's books include *Carl Maria von Weber*, 1968.

GAVIN A. WILLIAMS's *Madoc: The Making of a Myth* was published in 1980.

PYLLIS WILLMOTT is the author of *Growing Up in a London Village: Family Life Between the Wars*, 1979.

CHRISTOPHER WITTELS is a lecturer in Music at Goldsmith's College, London.

The Man From Selborne

In a toying manner
The cock pursued the hen.
His toy the hen.
The vast rains ceased.
The delicate weather now began.

I note the silent bird on the bough
Which, flying, chatters, passing through the air
That rubs a tune from throat and feathers;

It is not the bird's the songster, but the air.

The vast mazy buildings of that place,
The many waters round it.

The slender, dusky scarabaeus is the male worm;
The female is a light to him, and his toy.

The spring heads never freeze, the wagtails
Seek out the ever-flowing sources.

At midnight on Christmas Eve
To assemble beneath the thorn-trees
And listen for the bursting of the buds,
Their stealthy opening.

The sexes change garments and woo,
The goose-dancing, each is the other's toy,
Vying with each other
In politeness and gallantry, for ever.

Peter Redgrove



Christmas Holidays

The Imperial War Museum was once quite small, housed in part of a building in Whitehall. I went there in the Christmas Holidays when I was ten - standards, pistols, carbines; red squares, charging men in that partly romantic art that cannot be said to lie but still doesn't adequately express how woefully men die. Uniforms worn by Troopers and Generals, no doubt, models of guni perhaps - but one thing stood out.

"The skull of a man shot from a gun," it said. And there was this unremarkable bony head.

It didn't say who he was, or what he had done. I realized this was a punishment and not horseplay or fun. I didn't even know for certain if he was killed. I'd seen a man shot from a gun, and I'd been thrilled. He landed in a net the other side of the arena, stood up and took a bow - with a pleased and untroubled demeanour. Bertram Mills' Circus, a holiday treat, at Olympia. But here the evidence that he came through was very much skimpier - non-existent in fact. I imagined him pushed down the barrel, and then I thought of the skull. I pondered these things quite a lot of the night.

I hoped he survived. But the skull! That was a puzzle. There's a realistic drawing of a man tied to a gun's muzzle in Gilbert's *Six Bells*; his eyes pop out of his head, the gunner holds the fire. It's clear he'll soon be dead, exploded over everything. The best execution: to choose (thought the British in India) because it upset Hindus.

I found out all this, bit by bit, and the more I was enlightened the more I became aware of evil, and frightened. Gulls, sin, Retribution: tracks in the brain, deep-grooved.

When I next went there, that exhibit had been removed.

Gavin Ewart

A Stone Age Decadent

Uh.

Uh. These errant stripes of sun
That feather in play across my legs design
Transient ochres, ripples which the Sea
Has lent the air. I seem to like it here:
My tribal brothers work back up the stream
For tucker; one small knot of womenfolk
Go gathering shellfish where gold sand meets rock
There in my middle distance. They compose quite well,
Sun-burnished nymphs and mothers with dry tongues.
Under these casuarinas on my slope
Of sandstone and soft needles I may hold
A laid-back peaco, keeping my cavernous head
Well stocked with pictures.

Mm... hmmm. Let them retain
Their rules and moieties. I disturb no-one.
Neither affront those boring Bluetongue rules
Nor trespass on Echidna's blunt decree
Here where a sea-breeze lightly lifts my hair
Flavoured with faint salt. Tribes are wise enough,
Let them think me no-hoper if they want to,
It troubles me no more than bushflies do
While thoughts waft up this hill: from here old Sea
Is crinkle-turquoise - rumpling, ruffled white;
Gulls and swallows thread it.

Uh. Sheer solitude,
Watching those topmost branches bar sky's wink
With their shockhead tresses. This is my secret
Adaptation of totemic ground,
Sequestered high, brown half-shade where I lounge
Sending my spirit out to meet the Sea.
Fly, fine colourless bird, on thinky wings,
The words we use are only the words we're given,
They do not like to hear me saying that,
Preferring old songs, with their boom-bam-boom:

Here the big wave runs upon the shore.
Here the spray blows up and up like smoke.
Daily the shellfish, dally.
Young girls gather foodstuffs by the white sands.
At night the seagull has stopped crying.
Daily the shellfish, dally.

Totem and law, laws and restrictive totems,
Banal, sublime, bestial, that's how
My fellow tribespeople make out the world.
Practical sure enough - the food comes in -
But bone between the ears; at their sheer best,
Witness down there, say, brownbeautifol yet dumb.
Motes dance in light-slant just above my shin
And the glow-filled Sea flakes off her thousand colours
In tides of mystery.

Listen. Gull and currawong
Sound their antiphon. How fast the shadows
Lengthen on sand, coarsen the hill-textures.
There is pleasure in it all if you sit still.

I do not think they like me very much,
Not even Moama with her small round breasts,
Scrub of light curls, pool eyes, fastmoving limbs
And buttocks I could cup in these two hands
And then... Oh-oh! It's very much too pleasant,
That's to say painful, this line of thought:
Body responds. There! She stoops at the rocks.
I see only a single cloud today.
Thin, flatish, grey-white, drifting above the horizon,
All else says blue meets blue. And I relax
On springy casuarina needles here, my den
With a view. A spinebill's vivid uniform
Flashes to flowers a little down my slope.
I flex, reflect, withdraw. Ah, me. We all
Must learn in a line of days to wither up
And die - or else die first. Just like the scallop,
Mussel, periwinkle, any living thing.
Ah! Know something now. Am I a fly?

Here the spray blows up and up like smoke.
Daily the shellfish, dally.

Peer closely at these jointed leaves or branchlets,
Green fingers of slender skeletal hands
Knobbed with small tan knuckles. Just to stare
With care at this or that makes world seem good,
Be it spiky conelets or multiply-scored bark:
I like it here. Those women on the sand
Make up a dance that fits a larger dance,
The bay, the hills contribute to my joy
As I do nothing. Ha. Yes. That's my game,
My hunt for needful store of images.
Lovely, yes; but what substance underlies all?
What might all change mean? Are we like shellfish
To be shocked, and eaten? Why does the great sun set
I wonder how we tagged these words to all.
Life is more than animal grease and ochre.
I well might fall asleep.

Chris Wallace-Crabbe

MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

Fictions for future leaders

Prue Shaw

Joy HAMBEUCHEN POTTER
Five Frames for the Decameron:
Communication and Social Systems
in the Cornice
220pp. Guildford: Princeton
University Press. £14.90.
0 091 0503 9

The relationship between the one hundred tales told in the *Decameron* and the cornice or frame-story which surrounds them - the story of the story-telling itself - constitutes one of the enduring conundrums of literary history. Ten aristocratic young Florentines (seven women, three men) abandon their plague-ravaged city and withdraw to a secluded and idyllic country retreat, where they entertain one another by recounting a story apiece on each of ten days. The contrast between the world of the tales and the world of the tales is absolute. The group of story-tellers is homogeneous (they are all young, of noble birth, and scarcely characterized as individuals); their daily routine is repetitive, patterned, collaborative (a procedure is established in which each in turn is king or queen for a day and rules the others); their behaviour is utterly decorous. The world of the stories, by contrast, seems to have the richness and variety, the conflict and unpredictability, of life itself. The plots frequently turn on the outwitting of a villain; the characters are drawn from all social classes; their conduct is rarely decorous, many of the tales being concerned with illicit sexual relationships or the shortcomings of those in religious orders. What is the reader to make of the juxtaposition of these two worlds?

Some critics limit the significance of the cornice to an extrinsic, architectural function - it imposes the pattern of ten groups of ten - dismissing it as an exercise in the common courts-of-love convention, and leaving Boccaccio's true energy and originality in the tales; most, however, see the juxtaposition as

significant and bearing on the question of the meaning of the book, or at least the meaning Boccaccio intended it to have for his readers. Certainly the pairs of terms which tend to recur in this context - ideal vs real, order vs chaos, aristocratic-feudal vs bourgeois-mercantile, medieval vs humanist - suggest not only the profundity of the abyss which separates the two worlds, but also the purposefulness of the juxtaposition, which must inevitably raise questions in the reader's mind about behaviour, codes of conduct, man's role as a social being.

Joy Hambeuchen Potter, in this interesting new study, sees the *Decameron* as a profoundly serious work, whose seriousness can be defined precisely in terms of the interplay between cornice and tales. The book, she argues, is educative in the broadest sense, its aim being social and political. Those to be educated are, firstly, the story-tellers themselves; and ultimately, through them, Boccaccio's readers. The story-tellers are a privileged elite, future leaders of a society in a state of transition and crisis. Their retreat from the world is, in anthropological terms, a "liminal" experience, a ritual preparation for future responsibilities, in which the story-telling is the learning experience, the stories themselves the "learning content". A skeleton plot of the book might run: "a visitation by God that precipitates a ritual in which the elite of society are taught the enduring values of their world".

The anthropological model enables Professor Potter to characterize the book's seriousness, while accounting for all its component parts: if Boccaccio's claim that the tales are meant as harmless entertainment to while away the idle hours of lovesick ladies were true, there would be no need for the cornice, nor for the long and graphic description of the Black Death in Florence in 1348 and the breakdown of social order in the city which followed the plague. The ambiguity created by the author's mock-modest statement of intent is a deliberate strategy to protect the subversiveness of his message.

Both the essential seriousness and the deliberate ambiguity of the *Decameron* are further analysed by Potter using concepts and terminology borrowed from semiotics and frame-theory. The five frames of her title refer to the layered construction of the text, which can be represented geometrically as a series of concentric circles: at the centre, the world of the stories; surrounding it, that of the cornice; then that of the plague; then that of the ladies for whom Boccaccio claims to be writing; finally, the outermost shell, the world of Boccaccio's book and its readers. By a constant play of "frame-shifts" and "frame-breaks", that is by deliberately slipping from one frame to another, Boccaccio disorients the reader, sustaining ambiguity about the frivolity or seriousness of his intentions. At the same time, the framing itself points to the value, the importance, of what is framed: the stories occupy the privileged position at the centre and carry the full weight of what Boccaccio wants to communicate.

Seriousness masquerading as frivolity is not a difficult concept to grasp, and perhaps does not require the painstakingly thorough demonstration that Potter provides. If the intention is serious, she claims, what is it that the story-tellers learn? Her answer is so generic as to be almost empty of content: "Boccaccio set out to teach his ten protagonists a good set of values that would enable them to preserve the old virtues and also to function effectively as leaders in their world." But what values? The difficulty is not so much that different stories reflect conflicting values - conflict can be instructive - but that it is notoriously difficult to pinpoint the "values" even single stories embody or celebrate. Does Boccaccio admire or condemn the nimble-witted but scandalous behaviour of his engagingly self-serving friar? At what point does tolerance become complicity? What "value" is being exhibited in the story of Alibech, the young girl who goes off into the desert alone in order to serve God, meets a monk who teaches her to "put the devil in hell", and develops

such a taste for this new religious exercise that she exhausts her mentor who views her eventual return to civilization with considerable relief? (Strangely, Potter says nothing of this text, being the only tale which parallels and parodies the cornice itself: the only story in the collection about a retreat, a "learning" experience, and a return to the world, although the "learning content" has become not discourse - stories - but sex.)

In fact, although Potter spends a whole chapter analysing Boccaccio's "desacralization" of the church as a social institution - and here the anthropological terminology adds little or nothing to what common sense suggests - she offers no comment about the many stories explicitly concerned with the fulfilment of sexual passion (yet here surely is where the true subversiveness of the book lies). If these are the raw material of instruction, just what is being learned? Again the blandness of the formulation is disconcertingly inadequate: "The ten future leaders of a regenerated society must learn to understand the passions that form part of everyday living and to give both reality and the ideal its due. As the incredibly rich garnish of the stories shows, they must also learn to control their desires when it is necessary for the greater good of society."

One unguarded remark of a more specific kind - to the effect that equality of the sexes "is not part of the values they are to learn" - enables us to pinpoint another difficulty. If the learning experience is the centre of the book's meaning, then the reactions of the listeners to the various stories become crucial: but these are never much more than perfunctory, and often seem to contrast with the spirit in which the story itself has been told. One of the ladies expresses at some length the traditional misogynist view of woman's natural inferiority to man; yet both cornice and stories, in very

different ways but with equal insistence, seem to assert the opposite. The most striking of all contrasts between the story-tellers and their characters is that the story-tellers, although each of them loves or is loved, are without exception chaste, while in the tales the characters who have amorous urges almost invariably find sexual fulfilment; yet the most striking parallel between cornice and tales is precisely that in both of them men and women are shown to be equals: absolute social and intellectual equals in the highly stylized and artificial world of the story-telling, absolute equals in human dignity and in their sexual natures in the tales. Set against this powerfully and repeatedly reinforced message, the conventional declaration of women's inferiority seems merely a token gesture. If the educational model requires that we "privilege" what the story-tellers say, as Potter does in this instance, then it imposes a naively one-dimensional reading on the rich ambiguity of the text; but in fact there seems to be an unresolved logical contradiction here, for Potter herself insists that the stories themselves carry the message.

The appeal of Potter's model is that it does justice to our sense that the *Decameron* is more than just a glorious romp, and that its claim to seriousness is in some sense, however difficult to define, ethical as well as artistic. That the book forces its readers to examine their values can be confirmed by anyone who has ever had the experience of discussing it with undergraduates: in all the Italian literary canon it is perhaps the text which most effectively compels this kind of scrutiny. But to impose the educational model too rigidly raises more problems than it solves. Professor Potter surely overstates her case when she concludes that a book condemned for many generations as obscene is in reality offering its readers a "training for leadership and responsible civic behaviour on the upper levels of society."

The Middle ground

Heather O'Donoghue

A. BURROW
Medieval Writers and Their Work:
Middle English Literature and Its
Background 1100-1500
220pp. Oxford University Press.
£9.50 (paperback, £3.95).
0 19 21355 7

P. W. Bateson was not a supporter of medieval studies, and yet it is neither appropriate nor ironic that John Burrow has dedicated *Medieval Writers and Their Work* to his memory. Burrow's book is concerned exclusively with literary matters. In the past that "most readers of Middle English are more interested in English literature than in the Middle Ages," he does not try, as other medieval critics have, to beguile his readers with descriptions of the intricate splendour of Gothic cathedrals or the medieval world-view, hoping thereby to lure them into an appreciation of medieval literature. This book does not provide the kind of background information its title may lead readers to expect.

Instead, taking as his starting-point the question of the prejudices of "the modern reader," Burrow presents this introductory work with a discussion of those criteria of medieval literature, and moves on to consider notions of authorship and readership, genre, modes of meaning and finally the reception, past, present and possible future, of Middle English literature in English literary tradition.

The question of which Middle English works deserve a place in the canon of English literature lies at the heart of this book. Recognizing the possibility of leaving almost no prose work at all in Middle English if the modern standards of *literature* are applied, Burrow cautions the reader against dismissing works on

grounds of non-fictionalness - although this is, of course, a trap modernist critics will be very well aware of. And yet, when he comes to consider medieval verse, Burrow has to admit that "the question may be simply one of quality". Much of *Medieval Writers and Their Work* bears out this admission: Burrow is clearly happiest and on firmest ground when discussing the literariness of the "big three" - Chaucer, Langland and the *Green Pastures*. As all those familiar with *A Reading of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Richardian Poetry* will know, Burrow can produce fine close readings of texts, and there are several excellent passages of such criticism even in this general, introductory book. He gives the reader a clear and enlightening analysis of the Good Samaritan scene in *Piers Plowman*, for instance. He just as effectively demolishes the opening of the verse romance *Havelok* (all "verbal rubble" and "stereotyped and inappropriate epithets") - but without giving any good literary reason for reading *Havelok*, beyond noting that the work is "not all... like this".

To introduce Middle English literature with the modernist in mind is almost inevitably to take up an embattled position. Burrow, however, is, and quite justifiably so, not defensively posturing about medieval literature. Indeed, the whole point of this book is to explain the strangeness of Middle English literature without indulging in special pleading for it. As a result, though, *Medieval Writers and Their Work* runs the risk of damning with faint praise, of raising doubts without quite dispelling them. There is also a slight air of wistfulness about the closing paragraphs, as Burrow ponders the future of Middle English literature. He remarks that "Middle English literature is not the same in the twentieth century as it was in the thirteenth; and in the twenty-first it will no doubt be different again", a characteristically cautious and relativistic view, but his next point -

that "perhaps future readers will be able to look more dispassionately at Middle English literature" - eloquently implies the defensive position which he has tried not to adopt.

I suspect that the reader Burrow has in mind for this book is the student who has already embarked on Middle English - probably because there is some compulsory medieval literature on the syllabus - and feels baffled and resentful. Such a student will find Burrow's approach congenial, stimulating and helpful. Throughout the book there are sound discussions of those questions undergraduates readers of Middle English invariably ask, and some useful distinctions are drawn: between allegory and exemplification, and between the affirmation and the imitation of truth in didactic literature. The bibliography is a model of what one would wish, but perhaps not expect, the good student to read. Sometimes Professor Burrow's categories are not very helpful: his chapter on genre, for example, fails to mention *Piers Plowman*, even as a notoriously difficult case, and I am not convinced of the usefulness of his division of Middle English narrative into "Fictions", "Lives" and "Tales", ingenious as it is. But this is an excellent book for drawing attention to and clarifying the special difficulties of Middle English literature, even though it may not entice or convert the reader whose interest and attention are not already compelled, either by natural inclination or by obligation.

The recently published Number 11 of the *New Series of Medieval and Humanistic Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Culture*, edited by Paul Maurice Clogan (200pp, Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, \$32.50, 0 8476 7105 4) contains fifteen original articles and review articles, principally on theology and literature. They include "Medieval Tragedy and the Genre of *Troilus and Criseyde*" by Andrea Clough.

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The surgeon's eye-view

Redmond O'Hanlon

MICHAEL LEVINE (Editor)

The Cree Journals: The Voyages of Edward H. Cree, Surgeon R.N., as Related in His Private Journals, 1837-1856

276pp. Exeter: Webb and Bower. £9.95. 0 906671 36 1

This book is the rich result of the kind of discovery which historians dream about: the finding, in a Devon farmhouse attic, of twenty-one bound volumes of diaries written by one of those Victorian Englishmen who can look death in the face with a quiet glance. The diaries are a reliable eye-witness account of life at sea in the early to mid nineteenth century, of the First Opium War, of the hunting and naval engagement of the missed pirate fleets of Sharr-Ing-tai across the South China Sea to the Tongkin River, of the slaughter of the Crimea; and their author is also a prolific water-colourist of great talent, a vivid and humorous observer and (certainly more than we have a right to expect at the price) his work is here lavishly reproduced, both throughout the text and in three huge panoramic pull-outs of the major paintings.

From the top of the conquered Porcelain Tower, the walled and moated city of Nanjing in 1842 unfolds across one's desk. H.M.S. Vixen, Pluto and Nemesis anchor in the bay before the Sultan's Palace, and Valorous, Odin and Hecla exchange fire with the great grim fort at Bomersund, one of the four main defensive points guarding the Gulf of Finland which commanded the sea approaches to St Petersburg, during the action in which Charles Davis Lucas, the Mate of HMS Hecla, lifted a live shell from the deck of his ship and heaved it overboard, which earned him the first Victoria Cross.

Skilfully edited from an original million and a quarter words (and a choice of 1700 paintings and sketches), the journals themselves are equally immediate. Edward Cree (1814-1901), the son of a Unitarian minister, read medicine at Dublin and Edinburgh and received his first appointment from the Admiralty as Assistant Surgeon to HMS Royal Adelaide, flagship at Devonport, whence he was ordered to do duty at the Naval Hospital, Stonehouse, under the Physician Sir David Dickson. The work was not arduous (but then Cree never seems to find anything arduous) and he particularly enjoyed the evening round, "which lasted about half an hour. Old Sir David had then evidently dined, and was sometimes a little thick in his speech and very crabbed, and I have seen him feel for the pulse of the leg of an empty bed which had been put up against the wall, much to the suppressed mirth of the nurse and Assistant Surgeon.

In a high wind on Saturday, June 24, 1837, Queen Victoria was proclaimed at the hospital gates and Cree, just as fresh to the task ahead, proud of his new blue and gold uniform, records his own ceremonial problems in characteristic detail: his "big cocked hat, was like a fore-and-aft sail" which almost, carried his head away, and his sword "would endeavour to get between my legs".

Leaving Balmouth ("what strikes one most... is the everlasting clatter of women's patters about the streets") and the "shores of old England, which soon grew dim and I sensed" he is ordered to Malta, noting everything along the way: with evident delight from "Marsala, the narrow strait of the Sicilian Channel, the Zambraia Rocks, to the 'fine sight' of the-of-the-battle ships coming in through the narrow entrance of Valletta harbour to full sail and firing a salute; three shrouding sail all at once and swinging round to their anchors". His entries glow with unfettered fleetings of desire: "Pretty legs under the hood or under the skirt"; with "good figures under scanty dresses"; "beauty held on deck ashore"; and with the attained satisfaction of almost equally good dinners in the officers' messes of grand ships ("many young lordlings among them").

The suspicion grows that at least a part of his easy toughness derives from the indirectly self-protective act of the writing and painting itself, a pleasurable ordering of event and identity which appears to cocoon him from many of the ordinary physical and psychological dangers of life at sea, and which will serve him well in the extraordinary testing to come. Cholera is a routine matter, but more telling, perhaps, are the failings before likewise invisible but more subtle onslaughts: a supernumerary lieutenant in the cabin next to Cree's is heard groaning to himself, "He said he had headache and seemed impatient about being questioned. His pulse was hardly perceptible, eyes suffused and bloodshot, extremities cold." The lieutenant commits suicide by taking arsenic ("He bequeathed his watch to some lady"), and a similar death gives Cree his first full post at sea, the Assistant Surgeon of H.M. Steamer Firefly "having poisoned himself in his cabin. This makes the third naval officer who has committed suicide on this station within the last week."

On HMS Rattlesnake (the same ship which set out six years later to survey the Torres Straits and the Australian Seas with another young naval surgeon and amateur diarist and painter on board, T. H. Huxley), in the China Sea, on a sultry morning in June, 1840, Cree, reading in his cabin, hears "the dismal cry of a man overboard". A young marine, jumping from the poop into the mizen-chains to clear the life-line, has missed his footing, and is "striking out for his life towards the life buoy which is within five yards of him. He was tugging away towards it but did not get nearer, although he was a good swimmer. The cutter with Harper and a crew had almost reached him when he disappeared to rise no more. They tried to reach him with the boat-hook; as the water was clear, they saw an enormous shark had got hold of his white jumper in the middle, gradually going down deeper and deeper till they disappeared. The men in the cutter tried to reach them with the oars..."

It seems a fitting prelude to an equally brutal conflict, the First China War. The conditions of trade with China had not changed much since the sixteenth-century account collected in Hakluyt's Voyages. The English found themselves constrained more or less as the Portuguese had been: when they went to Canton to trade, "they must remain there but certain days; and when they come in at the gate of the city, they must enter their names in a book, and when they go out at night they must put out their names. They may not lie in the towns all night, but must lie in their boats..." The Chinamen are very superstitious, and do not trust strangers.

And quite right too. The Chinese balance of trade with the British, in silk and tea, was initially in their favour, but with the huge growth of opium imports from India the outflow of Chinese silver became prodigious; in 1839 the Chinese banned the traffic and burnt £3,000,000-worth, 20,000 chests of European opium stocks. The British assembled an expeditionary force in Singapore, equipped with a deadly new weapon: steamships capable of towing men-of-war for hundreds of miles up the wide rivers of China to bring their firepower to bear on the inland cities.

As Cree remarks, "It seems a pity to carry war into such a peaceful country, but one must leave that consideration to the Home authorities." Chusan is the first victim ("on the smoke clearing the Chinese army were to be seen running in all directions"); in March 1841 the Rattlesnake runs into the Canton estuary and anchored "off the NW end of the Island of Hong Kong, with only a few fishermen's huts to be seen"; Journeying into the interior to join the fleet approaching Canton, Cree notes the "many dead bodies floating down the river, naked and blown out, some of them mutilated by our shot from the ships' broadsides"; records the constant small engagements, the lobbing of shells into Yoda ashore; enjoys the moonlit nights on deck, and admires the Celestial boat girls; "some not too modestly clad".

In 1843 Cree is promoted Surgeon

into HM Steam Sloop Vixen, and sets sail for the Savaak River to rescue a grounded survey vessel. He meets James Brooke, one of the future local lords, a white Rajah, a Somerset gentleman once of the Indian Army who put down a revolt in the province with the twenty man crew of his schooner the *Royalist*, and who kept "great state", Cree tells us.

He later steams up the Brunei River in Borneo to a Patuanan-like settlement, "an extraordinary looking place built on piles, extending a couple of miles alongside sandbanks on each side of the river, generally nearly dry at low water. The houses are mean, built of wood, thatched with palm leaves..." The British intrigue with the party at Court keen to develop trade, led by Muda Hassim (a Doramin figure), against those who believe that piracy is altogether more fun and much less effort, who follow Pangeran Usop. Like Sherif Ali in Lord Jim, he has a stockade about a mile up the river, and the British prepare to blow it to pieces. Anchored in mid-stream at night, flanked by the exotic menace of the jungled banks, a young marine understandably dreams that a Malay is slicing his throat, and Cree thereby discovers that he is not as well armed as he might be:

About 2 in the morning I was awake by a fearful shriek, followed by a confused sort of cry; I heard someone cry out 'They are boarding us over the starboard bow.' Wilcox, the first Lieutenant, rushed on deck and sung out 'Beat to quarters.' My half awake thoughts were that a desperate attack had been made on us by Malays; I seized my sword, but it having been such a peaceable weapon, I refused to leave the scabbard, being rusted in.

With Rajah Brooke, Cree joins the

naval expedition against Sherif Usman, "a desperate fellow, of Arab descent, with a following of Arabs, Malays, Illanuns and Sulu people; all pirates" - again like Jim's adversary Sherif Ali, "an Arab half-breed" with his "tribes in the interior" and "wild men". The pirate fort, near the mouth of a small river on Marudu Bay, beneath the great mountain, Kinabalu, is protected by a boom, slung from bank to bank, on which their guns are accurately laid, and against which the British boats are forced by the tide. Cree does the best he can for the "dreadful wounds" left by round shot, operating "on a crowded deck, by the light of half a dozen dip candles, with too many excited lookers on"; and, after the action, he amputates the grapeshot-mangled arm of a rescued slave-girl.

at which she never squeaked, but held her baby tightly in her other arm. She was frightfully ugly, but the sailors were very attentive, and as she had no clothes to speak of, soon rigged her out in white jacket and trousers. The picaninny was made a pet of, and it was laughable to see a rough old sailor carefully making pap out of a ship's biscuit and feeding the baby.

In March, 1846, Cree "Went on shore, in old England the first time nearly seven years." He is troubled by multiple Proustian small deaths-in-life - the failure of anyone to fit his flesh, unchanged memories of them; the "number of pretty girls quite bewilders one". A further spell of large-scale pirate hunting in the far East takes Cree to 1852 when he returns home, and deciding he can bear it no longer, marries a pretty girl himself. All that suppressed yearning for every second native female, colonial daughter and officer's wife certainly entitled Cree to enjoy his

honeymoon; and I think we may take that he did. Alongside the picture of himself undoing his tie, watched by his bride, in an attic bedroom in Paris, a Cloud, where, he tells us, "A single shot shoots up to 140 feet; tops all the high grounds, high above the trees, and like a shower of silver."

The Journals end with Cree's account of war in the Crimea - with pictures of mortar-boats at sea before Sebastopol, the men themselves like cooking-pots suspended from a frame of poles, huge black cauldrons, their sides tilted slightly towards the shore; and astonished descriptions of the size of the battles ("Such an infernal din as I never heard before, from 5 or 6 miles big guns"); and with private luncheon the menu of official luncheon ("The old pluck of Benbow and Nelson has departed"). He is a keen recorder of new weaponry: "three French floating batteries had arrived, big square-looking iron boxes with eight ten heavy guns of a side, coming up slowly against the large fort, and fired away vigorously against them. It was strange to see the shot striking their iron sides and flying off, and generally split into pieces. By 9 AM batteries had steamed into position and then opened a terrible fire, in volleys which brought down the outer wall of the fort in cartloads at each volley"; and he provides a constant professional commentary on medical conditions: captured Russian hospital, in which "much worse than the British equivalent, 'smell - oh, how a smell!'".

Michael Levine has equipped his remarkable document with an efficient introduction and running notes, details of Cree's various ships, and biographies of the dramatic persons and numerous very clear maps.

from Tahiti to the West Indies, was the Bounty's task.

There follows a brief account of the events leading up to the mutiny, and the mutiny itself. All Bounty historians are then faced with the fact that the fate of those cast adrift is well documented, that of those who remained voluntarily on Tahiti sketchily documented, while the hard core who settled on Pitcairn are the object of speculation and unsubstantiated recounting years later by the few who survived what seemed to have been a series of misadventures occasioned by sexual and racial jealousy. Christian gives less than two pages to Bligh's open boat voyage, one of the greatest acts of survival and examples of navigation in maritime history, and some seventy-five pages to the fate of those who remained on board. The rest of the book tells of the author's own ill-starred and finally successful attempt to sail to Pitcairn, which is the most entertaining and amusing part of this enthusiastically written account.

The strength of the Bounty legend lies not only in its colour, excitement and passion. Prejudice has kept it alive, too, and true to tradition Christian provides us with a devastating portrayal of Captain Bligh as Charles Laughton gave on the screen. When Bligh does not "bully" and "whistle", he is full of "barbaric" and "poisoned words". His actions "were the author's assets, nothing better than a four-mouthed bully", while, when it came to dealing with natives, "his feet were 'all-out' receptive" to their kisses. But to call him a coward does, I fear, stretch credulity.

The author belongs to what Barbara Tuchman defines as the "must-be-told" school. His hero's thoughts are subjects for speculation, and the mutineers "certainly missed many things" about what he would do when he had the Bounty. It was, incidentally, not unusual to include a commentary of a ship destined for a long voyage. Nor was the Bounty the first British ship to visit Tahiti in the rain. Captain Cook caught part of the season in 1769, 1774 and 1777. All this, this is not an important contribution to Bountyana.

Trouble on board

Richard Hough

GLYNN CHRISTIAN

Fragile Paradise: The Discovery of Fletcher Christian, Bounty Mutineer 256pp. Hamish Hamilton. £12.95. 0 241 10757 1

We are nearing the bicentenary of the mutiny on board HMS Bounty and public interest shows no more sign of ebbing than in 1789. Within weeks of Captain Bligh's return to England in that year, the Royalty Theatre put on *The Printer, or the Calamities of Captain Bligh*. A musical followed in Paris, and the first round in the long-drawn-out printed battle was fired. June 1789 when Bligh's own *A Narrative of the Mutiny on board His Majesty's Ship Bounty* appeared on the bookshelves. The chief mutineer's brother replied with a pamphlet defending Fletcher Christian. Bligh's *An Answer to Certain Assertions and A Voyage to the South Sea* swung public opinion in his favour. In the nineteenth century biographers tended towards extremes, either of Bligh as a foul-mouthed flogger and Christian as a harshly treated victim, or of Bligh as a brilliant navigator, and of Christian as a ruthless pirate.

By the 1930s, scholars and biographers were taking a much more balanced view, led by the Australian George Mackenzie with his fine two-volume biography of Bligh, and by Owen Rutter who wrote, or edited, no fewer than eight titles on the mutiny and mutineers. Then the cinema screen unfolded this steady work with its turn, Errol Flynn; Clark Gable and Marlon Brando creating their own caricatures of the mutineer. Today, Uppsala, Sweden, is the unlikely first source of Bountyana; scholars in Australia, America, Norway and Britain, as well as Sweden, explore the documented material, while amateur historians sail in the wake of the Bounty and her launch *Raid*.

The last voyage of the Bounty is indeed one of the most dramatic in

maritime history. The ship itself is crank, the crew mainly scallywags, the Irish musician blind, the surgeon drunk, the master's mate - Christian - tall, handsome and weak, the Captain short, and uneven in temperament. Cape Horn is fought for three terrible weeks, the struggle lost along with the voyage's timetable. Incidents ashore and afloat hint ominously of trouble to come. At the Rousseauque paradise of Tahiti sexual licence and idle hours make for more mischief, the inclination to jump ship grows stronger, and once at sea the weakened discipline cracks. The Captain and a score of loyalists are cast adrift to certain death, and amazingly survive. The mutineers mostly meet sticky ends, on the false paradise of Pitcairn Island or from a yardarm after a dramatic Portsmouth court-martial. And at the end of it all, a dozen mysteries remain.

A new decade of Bounty studies opens with Glynn Christian's apology for Fletcher Christian; it is a curious work, large in format and illustrated with photographs of the author in colour and black and white, of Honda motorcycles on Pitcairn today, stills from all the movies, as well as the familiar prints and engravings.

In the opening chapter, Mr Christian tells us why he embarked on his "discovery" of his great-great-grandfather: "I hoped that knowing more about Fletcher Christian might explain some of my other, wilder ways, and the paradox of self-doubt and ambition." It is reassuring to learn at the end that "My discovery of Fletcher Christian has proved far more rewarding than I dared imagine, for in unravelling his background and motivations I discovered my own. And through that I know the rest of my life will be immeasurably richer."

That is good news indeed. But what of Christian's readers? Well, in this book they are offered a potted biography of the two protagonists, with further more, and some new information on Christian's ancestry. The author sketches in notes about living conditions at sea, and the corruptive influence of life on board in breadfruit, the transplanting of which

SOCIAL HISTORY

Working towards the Wedding

Mary Lefkowitz

DEBBIE LUKATSKY and SANDY BARNETT TOBACC

The Jewish American Princess Handbook 144pp. Arlington Heights, IL: Turnbull and Willoughby. \$4.95

ANNA SEQUOIA (née Schneider)

The Official J.A.P. Handbook 200pp. New York: New American Library. \$5.95.

Recently a friend gave me (second) husband (an Englishman) a copy of *The Preppy Handbook*, for use as a guide to the dress and behaviour of the sort of American society in which (for better or worse) he would now be apt to find himself. A preppy is a graduate of what in England would be called a public school, but in America the Ivy League (Harvard, Yale, Princeton) and many other less well known colleges with similar standards and disciplines. The male graduates of these places, like *Love Story's* Oliver Barrett IV, go on to become lawyers or doctors; the women tend to take over the useful jobs which serve as a kind of holding pattern until they land a preppy husband. Eligibility to become a preppy is determined mainly by birth, but also by ambition; a dear child (until very recently they tended to use potentially pejorative words like Jewish or Catholic) can be admitted to a prep school if he or she "is in". *The Preppy Handbook* spells out in detail the names of their schools, their favourite clothes and where to buy them, where to live, and what to do, at every stage of life - information that a generation ago preppies-in-training like myself could only glean nervously from between the lines of real preppies' conversations. They did not go to our stores (as shops

are called in America) or wear our clothes, but I soon realized it was better to do what they did. So I was delighted when our friend seemed to include me in their special world.

Until very recently new arrivals to this country sought to acquire the identity of the first settlers; not of course as they looked when they left the cramped hold of the Mayflower to build their tiny cottages at Plymouth, but as they looked and spoke when one saw their confident faces and three-piece striped grey suits behind the vice-president's or the Principal's imposing and polished mahogany desk. But now, as the result of the civil rights movement of the 1960s, it has become fashionable to recover one's "roots", and, as necessary, to romanticize them. Only two years after *The Preppy Handbook* appeared, and with it official Preppy pins, tote bags and calendars, one finds on the check-out counters of bookstores in the more exclusive suburbs little stacks of one of the two competing handbooks on how to be a JAP, or Jewish American Princess. The JAP species of course had existed when I was in prep school but no one had a nice name for it; now both books claim that non-Jews will not only want to see but even be one.

As in *The Preppy Handbook*, nothing in either JAP book is left to the imagination. The more comprehensive of the two books, Sequoia's *Official J.A.P. Handbook*, suggests how anyone, Italians, Greeks, even WASPS or Blacks (yet) may become a JAP. Identity is defined primarily in terms of clothes and other possessions. But where the preppy female would wear her brother's outgrown sailing jersey, the JAP would sport one of her own new dozens of cashmere sweaters. Everything the JAP owns will be expensive, but of course also, good value, ie, bought in a sale or wholesale through family connections. While the young preppies then drives a Volvo (a sturdy car that will last for years), the young JAP mother drives (ironically) a

more impressive BMW or Mercedes. Just as a preppy female never outgrows the imprint her school and social background make on her, so the JAP even in her seventies never outgrows being a Princess: she loves to get presents (even if it is her sixth dressing gown), to be spoiled, to luxuriate in her wealth and in the variety of her possessions. What does a JAP make for dinner? According to Lukatsky and Tobacc, Reservations. What is her favourite wine? "I want to go to Miami Beach." Feminists will note that the JAP doesn't want to be liberated or even independent; instead she always remains someone's pampered little girl.

Both books describe accurately the essential elements of the family life that sustains such princesses: (1) *Maintaining a feeling of inherent guilt.* In first generation families, this was done directly: "no more to eat" don't you like my cooking? Now guilt is transmitted electronically: "why weren't you home when I called?" A mother, like Mission Control talking to astronauts in space, can keep tabs on her scattered children and grandchildren by telephone, without leaving the comparative comfort of her Florida condominium; JAP daughters must trunk calls from their college rooms to make sure that Mommy has watered the plants in her room at home. (2) *Perennial dissatisfaction* with the appearance, behaviour and performance of the other members of the family, or as my cousin Nan (PhD, Harvard) once put it, "everything you do is wrong". The principal subject of maternal complaint, as both handbooks observe, is the JAP's hair. Hair, in a way, is the perfect subject, since adjustments to its appearance can be made frequently and at relatively reasonable cost (compared to the surgical reconstruction of her nose). Clothes and boyfriends also provide profitable grounds for the JAP's characteristic mode of JAP communication, the argument. Lukatsky and Tobacc offer a

convincing scenario for the JAP's *bat mitzvah*, including six fights with Mother, about such cosmic matters as the colour of her nail-polish and party, or indeed nothing at all. (3) *Exclusiveness.* Inter-marriage with or too great trust in *goyim* (gentiles) and other outsiders is disapproved of. The JAP is also discouraged from owning pet animals, because they will track in dirt and (far worse) germs, and also cause allergies; note that the JAP is allergic or has trouble with her skin, while the *shiksa* (working-class gentile girl) has acne.

It soon becomes apparent that whatever is Jewish about the JAP has nothing to do with her religion. The *bat mitzvah* is clearly seen as a puberty rite, the JAP equivalent of a WASP coming-out party; the Wedding, the prime goal of the JAP's life, is a purely social event, celebrating not so much the start of a new family as the copying into the old family of a new paying member, to help keep the supply of cashmere and Gucci leather coming in. Nor - as so often in Europe - is being Jewish associated with intellectual achievement. The JAP's education is only a means to the unquestionably desirable end of securing a husband; she chooses her "major" or course of university study because of the practical use to which she can put it (ie, where she might meet the right man). JAPs are naturally clever and industrious (unless they have learning or emotional disabilities, but none by definition can be stupid or lazy), but the grown JAP reads catalogues of clothing rather than books. It would do greater justice to Jews in the rest of the world if the acronym were written JAP, for the creature, at least as described in these two books, is more American than Jewish, a product of the suburban diaspora of big cities, and most particularly of the Mecca (sic) of the clothing world, New York. Even the generalization of the role of Princess is American, as the case of that archetypal (*shiksa*) American Princess Undine Spragg will illustrate: "It's normal for a man to work hard for his womenfolk", indeed it is "the custom of the country", as Edith Wharton wrote in 1913.

Though neither book says so explicitly, the JAP they describe

Top trivia

Brian Masters

CRAIG BROWN and LESLEY CUNLIFFE

The Book of Royal Lists 288pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £6.95. 0 7100 9358 6

The *Book of Royal Lists* is not so much a book as a collection of notes for a dozen potential books and items lifted from two dozen others. The current fact for lists is harmless enough, and the most assiduous compilers may produce lists which are either joyfully entertaining or extremely useful for reference. The trouble with this book is that Craig Brown and Lesley Cunliffe cannot make up their minds whether to be serious or silly, and the result is a woeiful hybrid.

Among the useful categories are ten ways in which the Queen could use her Royal Prerogative, burial places of Kings, Queens and Consorts since the Conquest, second sons who have succeeded to the throne, four holders of warrants from Edward VIII, longest reigns, last words, royal aliases, and the line of succession from one to fifty-six. It is also helpful to have the Civil List at hand. Penelope Worthington has contributed, I'm guessing, of Constitutional Monarchy, of which the "Political" wisdom, and "ex-Perfance", is constantly under-rated.

To find these nuggets the reader must pass through pages of trivia. These alternatives to "My husband and I" which the Queen has used; members of the Royal Family who have been spanked; royal views on English weather; members of the Royal Family who have tripped or fallen down; and

belongs to the third generation of East European immigrants, ie, is the offspring of the first generation to have made good money and moved to what someone born in New York City regards as the *countryside* (eg, large towns in the vast conurbation around New York like Scarsdale or South Orange or Lawrence, LI). One supposes that the females of certain orthodox sects are omitted because they aren't American, if that term, as in these two books, is understood to mean materialistic, upwardly mobile, efficient, and culturally limited. Also excluded is the vixen ruche (JLippon Manhattan)P, usually of German extraction, "no Yiddish spoken here", colleges tend to be pure IVY, disdains designer labels" (Sequoia's definition), who is clearly pseudo-preppy.

Still, it is probably a good sign that JAPs can be thought to epitomize rather than simply be assimilated into characteristics of American society that are familiar to and even admired in much of the rest of the world. If *The Preppy Handbook's* fate can serve as a model, now that JAPness is official, it will soon be considered normal. In America even satire, if it is sufficiently popularized, can be transmuted into a form of approval: I knew that the revolution of the 1960s was over when I saw advertised in the Saks Fifth Avenue Christmas catalogue (yes, I do read them) a denim jacket with fox lining - the battered jeans of the student rebels had been converted, along with silver gunbells, into radical chic. *The Preppy Handbook* claimed that pink and green, whales and ducks, along with the Izod crocodile (sic; despite popular belief, it's not an alligator) were favoured preppy colours and symbols. Within a year the not particularly trendy Boston department store Filene's displayed in its normally conservative men's department kelly green trousers on which pink whales the size of Izod crocodiles had been embroidered. I suppose someone must have bought them because they weren't around when I went back (I confess) to check out the late summer sales. Presumably, then, anti-semitism will soon be replaced by pro-semitism. In the wake of preppiness and JAPness. Since I'm an American, I'd believe it, if I weren't Jewish.

how the Queen, Prince Philip and Prince Charles take their coffee: the Queen has it white with sugar, Philip black with sugar, and Charles "none at all - he doesn't like it".

There are a number of inaccuracies. In a list of upsetting diseases suffered by English monarchs, the Princess of Wales (who is not a monarch) is given homoclesmia (which is not a disease) when she was at finishing school. We are also told that, of eight titles by which members of the Royal Family are known, the Princess was called "Miss Diana" by her pupils at kindergarten. (What else would they have called her?) The young lady in question is referred to throughout the book as "Princess Diana", which she is not, as she is not the daughter of a prince of blood royal - she is the Princess of Wales, the Duchess of Cornwall, and half a dozen other things.

I was interested to learn that the Queen races pigeons, can strip and service an engine, removes corgis' fleas personally and has adopted some leper children, if only because such anecdotes may shiver a flagging dinner-party. Can Queen Anne's coffin really have been wider than it was long? It matters little: This is fodder for conversation, not enlightenment.

King Montgomery-Massingberd has contributed a delightful list of anecdotes, which includes the rough good sense of a King of Hanover who, on the request of a courtier who said, "Allow me to throw myself at Your Majesty's feet", replied, "Rubbish! If you did, you would split your trousers". The compilers have omitted, however, their most important list of all, and that is the bibliography of sources wherein they found their weird mixture of the dull, the quirky, and the interesting.

